

# Trams in Edinburgh – where next?

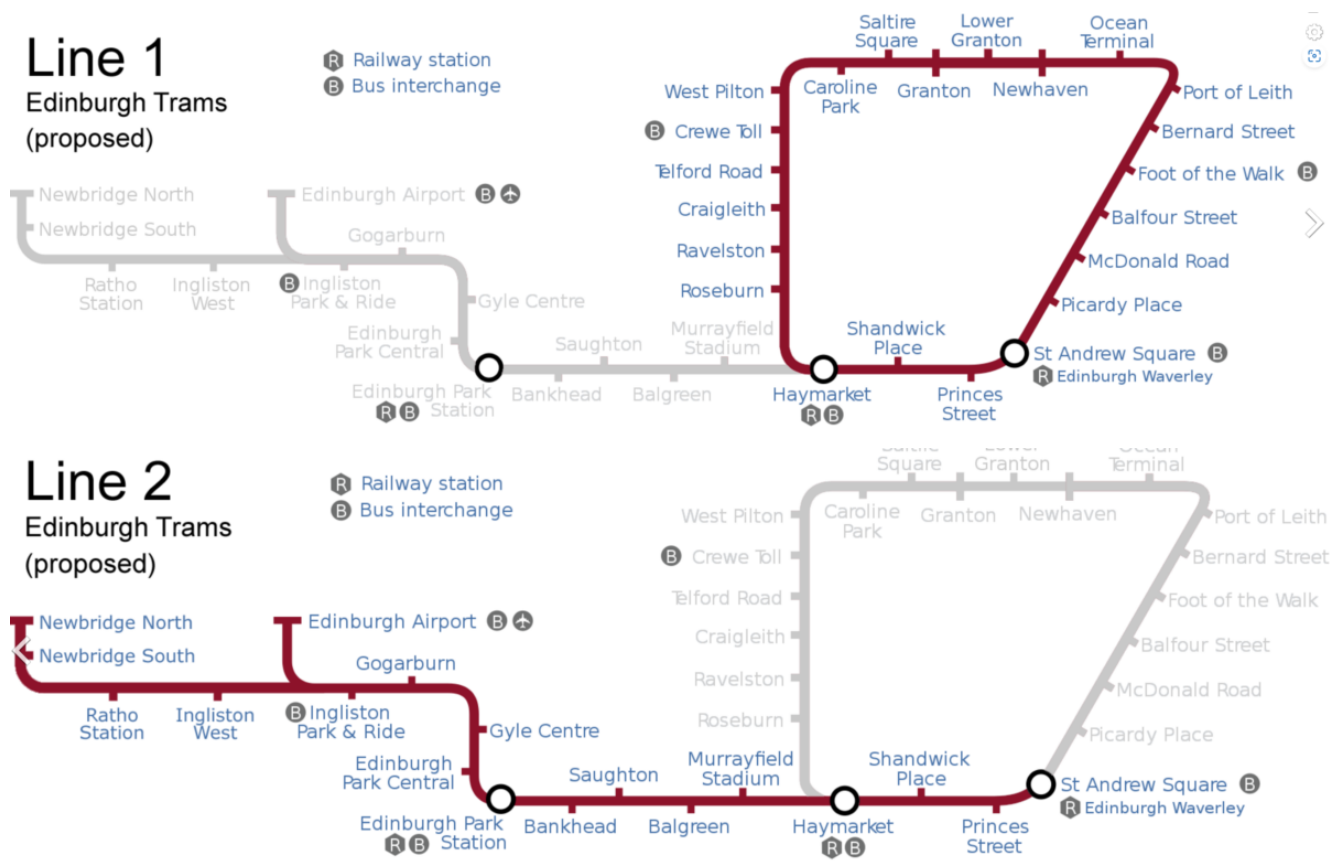
The part of the tram route from Roseburn to Granton was given statutory approval by The Scottish Government (who might or might not have some money to put towards a new part of the tram network) in 2006, during the first tram project.

And while it could still be some years away, the next part of the tram route is already actively under consideration by council officers and the Transport Convener, Cllr Scott Arthur. So where is any extension likely to go?

Speaking with the Transport Convener he explained that he and the team of council officers went out recently exploring the Roseburn Path which could be at least a part of a prospective hybrid route. He confirmed that the off-road route **will not be used** for the tram at the expense of active travel – the broad

term used to cover walking, wheeling of all kinds with scooters, prams or wheelchairs and cycling – as there would now have to a “like for like replacement”, something not quite as important when the line was given legislative approval.

**The images below indicate the routes covered within the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) and (Line Two) Acts 2006 (note that a stop on Telford Road was planned and not Crewe Road South).**

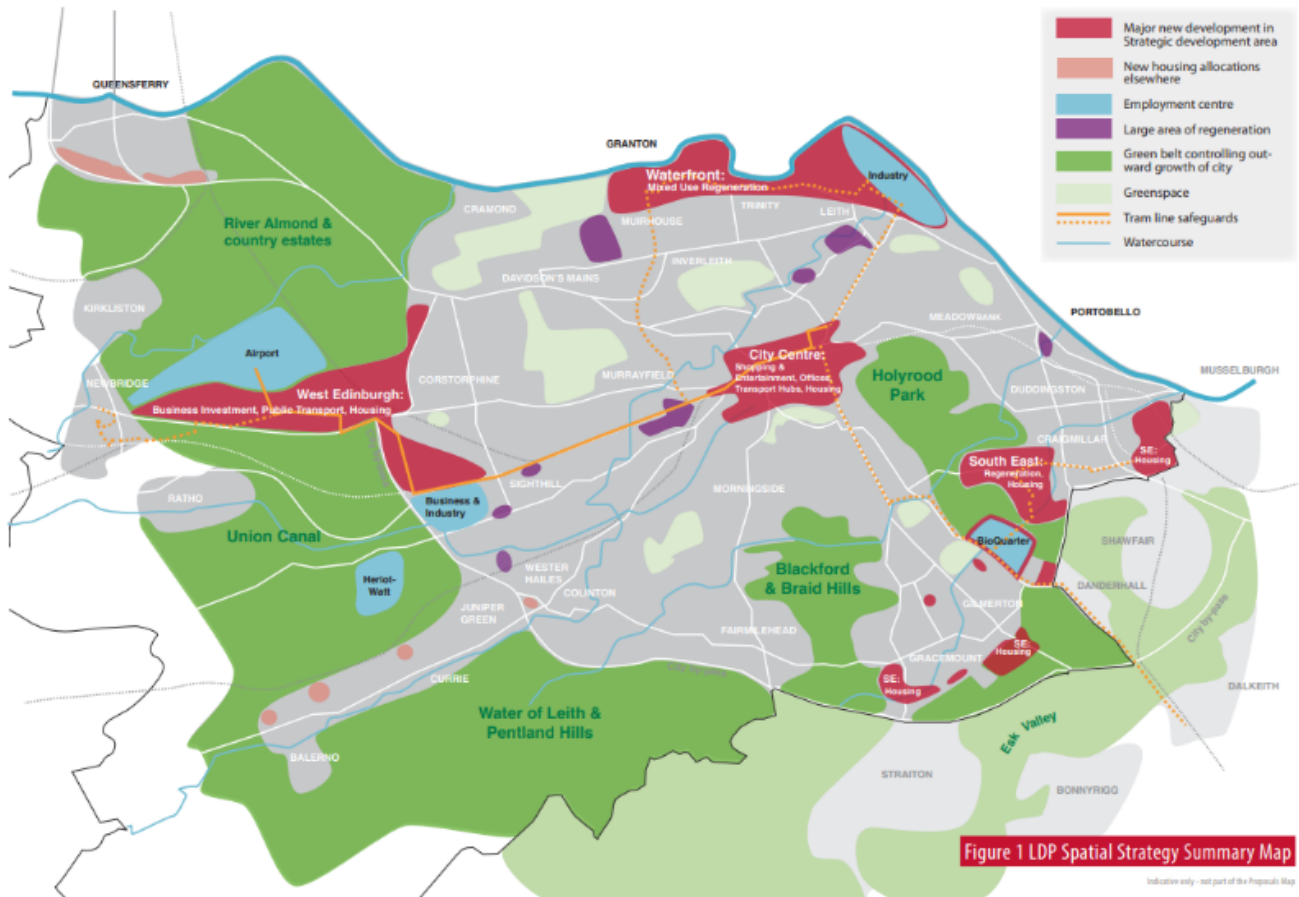


All of the North Edinburgh path network is now “well-used”. The Transport Convener said it is about more than capacity but he is mindful of the “additional benefits of walking along that green corridor rather than the side of a busy road”. Cllr Arthur said that consideration of active travel has moved on since 2006, but he also admitted that supporting it is also a

“big constraint” on where the route will eventually go.

While there is no specific agenda item under which all of this will be discussed by the Transport and Environment Committee on Thursday there is an item in the Business Bulletin – the framework within which the committee works from time to time. Headed up [Tram to Bioquarter the report outlines where progress is being made on the City Centre to South route](#) which will aim to reach the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and the bioscience area beyond. In Arthur’s view connecting both hospitals by also finishing the line from Roseburn to Granton could only be a good thing even if it will not link up with the line to Newhaven to create a circular loop – as the business case for that short part of the route does not stack up. There could be a short gap between the end of the line at Granton and where it currently terminates at Newhaven.

**The map below shows the tram routes safeguarded in the Council’s Local Development Plan.**



During a media briefing the Transport Convener explained that as part of the next tram route it would be important to him for the tram to call at the Western General Hospital. One way of doing that is to use a route partly along the cycle path and partly down Orchard Brae, and he talked about taking the tram across the Dean Bridge, but as a professor of Civil Engineering he knows that this does not come without engineering challenges, as well as logistical ones. He said: "It's a listed structure and I would hate to see the overhead pylons across it, personally. The minimum we need to have is a tram and a good footpath – there's not much room for anything else."

He suggested that using the Roseburn Path where there is already a hard base could be a better solution in that it would use less concrete, meaning less carbon. And then there are legal considerations to weigh up. If the council decides to deviate from the 2006 approved route then it could take anything up to two years to get the legislation passed at Holyrood.



The Scottish Parliament. Photo © 2023 Martin P. McAdam  
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Cllr Arthur explained to The Edinburgh Reporter: “So what is in the public domain already is the route which has been evolving since 2006 from the bridge at Russell Road, which already has a spur built into it, using the Roseburn Path all the way to Granton. This is the default, and the alternative route which was in the council’s Circulation plan was to take the tram route off the end of Princes Street, down Queensferry Road and down Orchard Brae to Crewe Toll turning left to Granton. It picks up what was the Roseburn line left of Crewe Toll and progresses to Granton.

“I think what I am sold on is having a good link to the Western General, and the Roseburn route alone doesn’t do that. The Orchard Brae route does, but it comes with problems over Dean Bridge and the road past the hospital, which is Crewe Road South.

“That gives you a good connection to the hospital but then you’ve got a problem with the bridge, and Crewe Road South

where there would have to be a lot of restrictions to make the tram work. It's not super wide there."

Cllr Arthur also said that by using Orchard Brae the council could be presenting itself with a "Leith Walk situation" all over again, by which he meant that the council would be trying to do too much with not enough space. Critics suggest that retaining public transport and cars and a segregated cycle lane on Leith Walk which is a wide street was never going to be easy. Taking a tram across the Dean Bridge might mean that other modes of transport would be impossible. Where would all the cars go if they can't use the Dean Bridge is a big question. And Scott Arthur confirmed that while all the routes are being looked at this will have to be followed by a detailed costing exercise.

But he is clear that the Granton to Roseburn route will have to pass close to the Western General Hospital. His view is that this would not only be of benefit to patients and visitors (anyone who has ever tried to park at any hospital can vouch for this) but also for members of staff. He believes the business case will prove that it will be the staff in the hospitals who would use the tram providing the revenue to make the extension work. And going to the Western General would mean that a connection to Craighleith Retail Park could also be included.

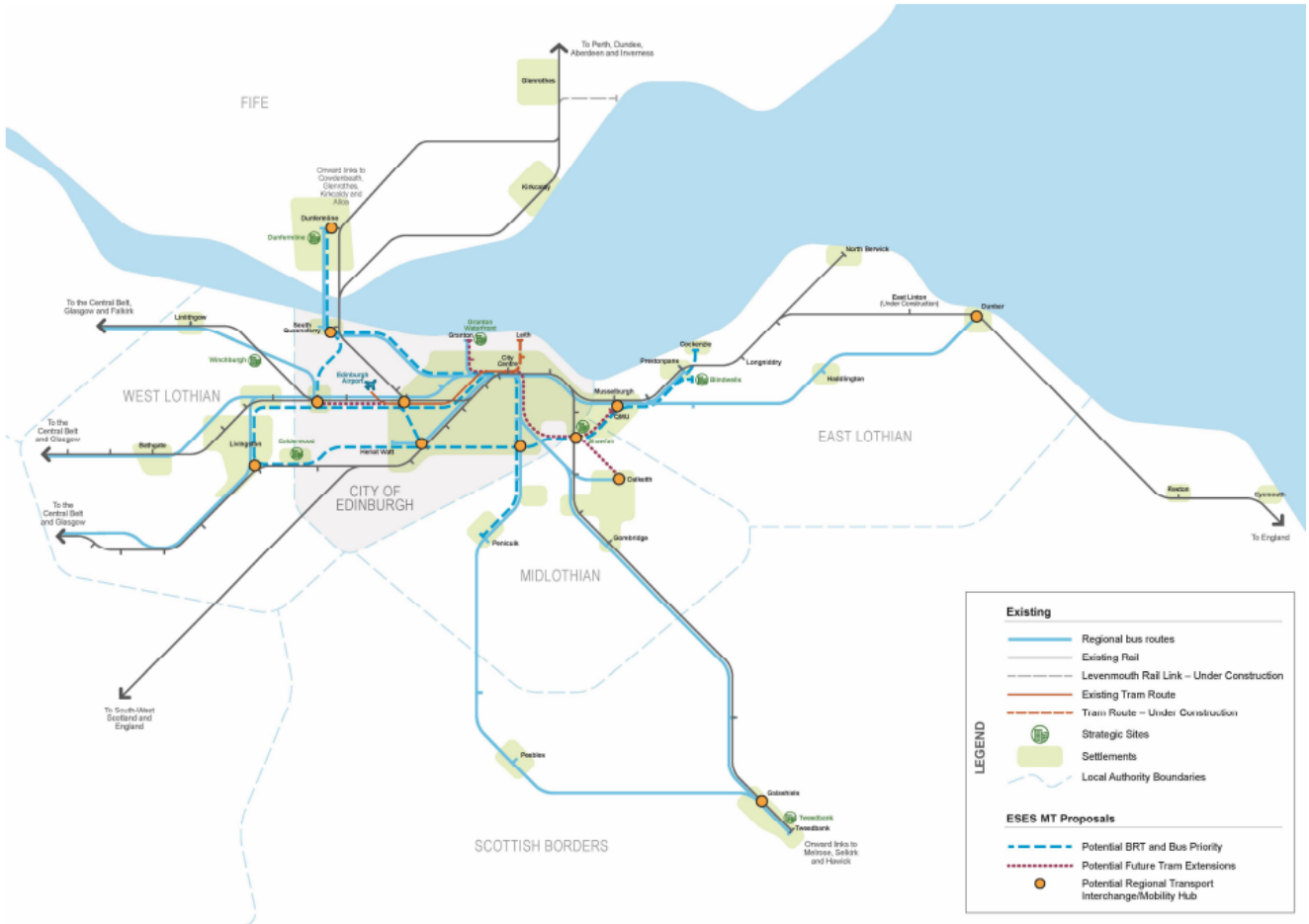
The route past the hospital on Crewe Road South would then continue onto Ferry Road for a short distance before picking up West Granton Access (where there is a good road and a shared path at the side). The tram would then arrive at the former Granton Station and service all the new homes planned or in construction in the area.

By the beginning of next year the council hopes to have firmed up its Strategic Business Case and be in a position to consult with the public on extending the tram to the Bioquarter, and as part of this exercise "route options, challenges and

opportunities will be presented to the public”.

So nothing is yet set in stone, but there are options and some of these come with big challenges.

**In the Scottish Government's second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) (published [December 2022](#)) recommendations were made to Ministers that Transport Scotland would work with partners to develop Mass Transit proposals in Edinburgh and the South East Scotland region, as per the plan below:**



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

After the briefing with the media Cllr Arthur tweeted some further explanation of what he had said with a useful graphic – and all with the caveat that none of this is actually being discussed at the upcoming Transport and Environment Committee on Thursday, simply being noted and progressed behind the scenes. As is the way of transport schemes nothing ever moves very quickly...

The first part of the line opened on 31 May 2014 – and the second part from St Andrew Square to Newhaven opened on 7 June this year. By the end of June passenger numbers had already doubled, confirming the business case on which this part of the line had been based.

<https://twitter.com/CllrScottArthur/status/1700396146126987755?s=20>