

More than 100 tram collisions in Edinburgh in a decade

Trams in Edinburgh have been involved in more than 100 collisions with road vehicles in the decade since the £1 billion transport system was introduced, it has been revealed.

Data released by Edinburgh Trams Ltd under freedom of information (FOI) reveals there have been 112 incidents where there was “tram contact with road vehicles” such as buses, cars, lorries and motorbikes since 2014.

In addition, there have been four logged where trams made “contact with cyclists”, not including a number of crashes involving cyclists and tramlines.

In a separate FOI, City of Edinburgh Council revealed that there had been seven “accidents/incidents” involving pedestrians and trams resulting in five reports of injury and one fatality.

The findings have prompted calls for an urgent safety review of the 11.5 mile system, which runs from Edinburgh Airport through the city centre to Newhaven via Leith.

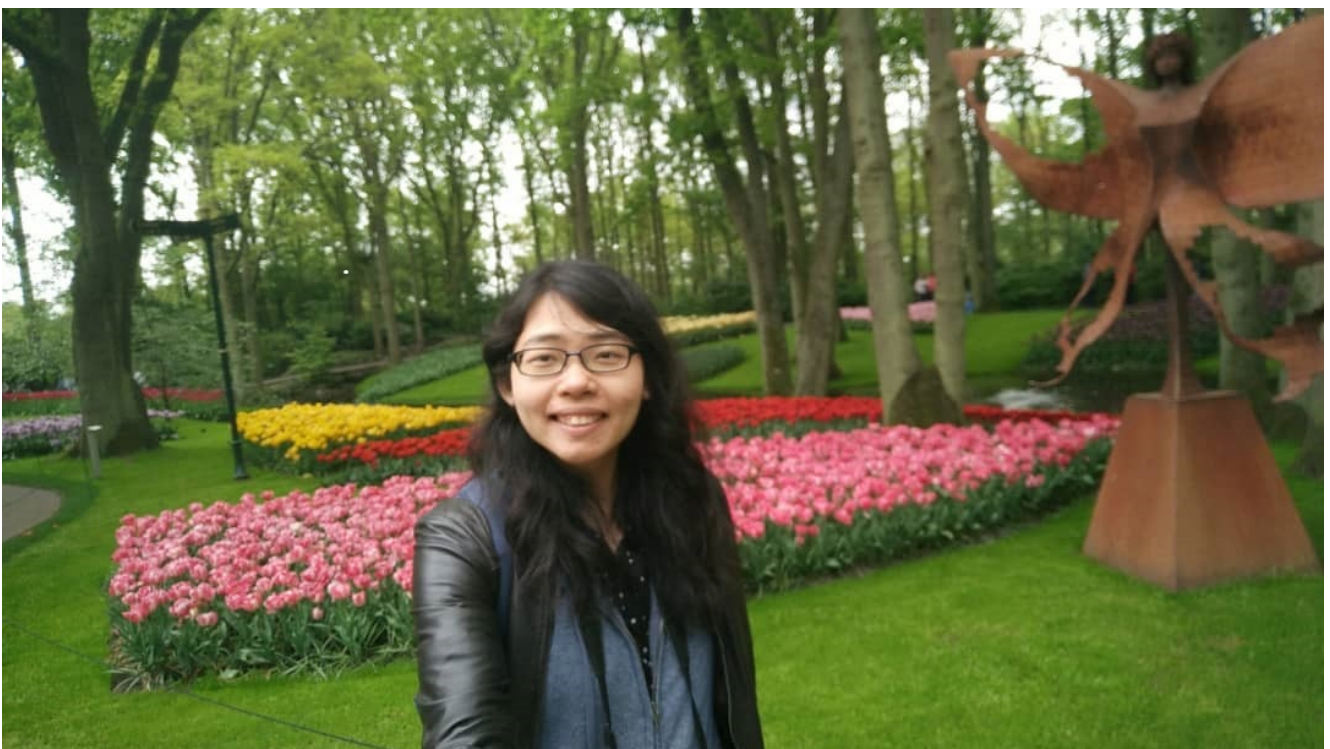
Miles Briggs, the Scottish Conservative MSP for Lothian, said: “In the time the Edinburgh Trams have been operating we have already seen several incidents where people have been injured or killed in incidents involving trams and on the tram lines.

“I have met with several of those affected to discuss what action needs to be taken to prevent further avoidable injuries occurring.

“There must be an urgent review by the SNP Government of what additional safety measures should be put in place. John Swinney must commit to making this review happen without further delay so that we can ensure the safety of residents and visitors in Edinburgh.”

Pedestrian Carlos Correa Palacio, 53, killed by a tram at a footpath crossing between the city’s Balgreen and Saughton tram stops on 11 September 2018. He was walking back to his car after finishing his morning shift as a bus driver when he was struck by the airport-bound number 260 tram, travelling at 33mph. This single fatality resulted in a Fatal Accident Inquiry, and the company was fined £240,000 after admitting a breach of health and safety legislation..

In June 2017, Malaysian medical student Zhi Min Soh, 23, died after her bike became stuck in tramlines on Princes Street and she fell into the path of a minibus following behind her.



Zhi Min Soh

Data from The City of Edinburgh City Council confirms that 44 collisions involving motor vehicles and trams had been recorded by its insurance services team, with Police Scotland notifying them of six injuries.

A total of 13 claims made by pedestrians and motorists have been “lodged and settled” by the council, with £8049 having been paid out in compensation, separate to any claims in connection with the tracks. Further claims remain ongoing.

It has previously been revealed that The City of Edinburgh Council has paid out over £1.3million in compensation to cyclists who were injured or had their bikes damaged after slipping on the rails or getting their wheels stuck.

Edinburgh’s troubled tram system opened in 2014, three years late and hundreds of millions of pounds over budget. It was also a fraction of the intended length.

A nine-year long inquiry chaired by Lord Hardie told of “a litany of avoidable failures”. An extension to Newhaven opened last year before the report was complete.

A spokesman for the Lothians cycle campaign group Spokes said there had been no cycle-related accidents on the new stretch of tramline.

He said: “The section which has by far the most cyclists is Leith Walk. Here, the Council has installed segregated cycle lanes. They have not been very well designed unfortunately but, despite that, they have the huge benefit of enabling cyclists to keep away from the tramlines.

“As a result of this we have had no reports at all of tramline bike crashes on the Leith Walk section of the new tramline, apart from one case where a cyclist needed to cross at a junction and skidded on the lines.”

City of Edinburgh Council Leader Cammy Day said: “Alongside

Edinburgh Trams, we continually review, assess and implement safety campaigns and infrastructure changes to improve safety around tram operations.

“On the issue of cyclist safety, we recently completed the implementation of the final phase of the tram cycle safety improvements programme.

“This put in place measures to minimise the risk of cyclists falling while crossing tram tracks at key locations along the original line from Edinburgh Airport to York Place. The programme was developed in partnership with Spokes. Similar measures were also incorporated into the designs in the Trams to Newhaven project.

“We’ll continue to engage with key external stakeholders, including Spokes, going forward. We’re committed to making sure our award winning tram network is keeping on track and is safe for everyone.”

A spokesperson for the Office of Road and Rail (ORR), which is responsible for monitoring and enforcing performance and efficiency of National Highways, said: “We have been working with the Light Rail Safety and Standards Board to ensure that safety, standards, and good practice continues to be improved across all tramways, including Edinburgh Trams.

“Edinburgh Trams has introduced improved safety measures on their tram fleet to improve audibility warnings to pedestrians and installed new signage and bollards at crossings to improve the safety of pedestrians at crossings. New red-surfaced cycle lanes to direct cyclists on the safest route to cross the tram tracks to avoid getting their wheels stuck, have also been introduced.”



23/3/2024 Tram Crash at Gyle Shopping centre. Picture Alan Simpson