

Tram Extension to Newhaven: Further Comments by Living Streets Edinburgh

A. Introduction

Living Streets Edinburgh Group (LSEG) is the local voluntary arm of the national charity, Living Streets, which campaigns for better conditions for 'everyday walking'. In LSEG our key aim is to promote walking as a safe, enjoyable and easy way of getting around the city. This note supplements the responses we made to the initial public consultation in April (<http://www.livingstreetsedinburgh.org.uk/2018/04/27/commentary-on-taking-trams-to-newhaven-consultation/>) and July 2018.

In general, we remain supportive of the tram extension and further investment to improve public transport in Edinburgh. This is essential if the city is to become less car-dependent while at the same time growing by at least an expected 100,000 people in the next 20 years.

B. Positive aspects

We are encouraged by a number of new elements in the proposed tram design, as shared with us on 11 October 2018. Together, these will represent significant improvements as part of the process of making Edinburgh a truly 'walkable city':

- General adherence to the Council's Street Design Guidance (SDG), with many tightened junctions, continuous pavements, etc.
- Three or four locations where roundabouts are being replaced by traffic lights with signalised crossings, which are easier for pedestrians to cross.
- Major improvement of Elm Row and the awful London Road junction.
- New 'public realm in several few areas, eg Bernard Street, Ocean Terminal roundabout.
- Many more crossings (signalled and informal) across Leith Walk (north end).
- On Leith Walk, all lamp-posts will be relocated to the (1.8m wide) central reservation, aiding comprehensive pavement decluttering.

C. Remaining areas of concern:

- Some pavements are very narrow, especially at three bus stops at the north end of Leith Walk (one on the west side, two on the east); here the pavement is approximately 2m wide (with bus stop 'floating'). This is inadequate and fails to meet SDG standards; we support the tram team's suggestion that pavements are widened to 2.4m, by 'pinching' the one-way cycle path further at these bus stops.
- We continue to have concerns regarding widespread use of 'floating bus stops' throughout the scheme, at a time where the promised evaluation of the first such bus stops in the Pilrig to McDonald Rd area remains outstanding. We also understand that there is insufficient room for this type of bus stop design to comply with SDG standards at these three bus stops. A lack of space could create conflicts for cyclists and pedestrians, especially if there isn't grade separation – as per the Pilrig to McDonald Rd section design.

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- We are concerned that New Kirkgate is still an 'option' for a cycle route. Although we understand why northbound cyclists will be banned from entering Constitution St (because cycling will not be permitted through a tram stop) the Kirkgate is not a suitable place for commuter cyclists, or any other non-walking through-traffic.
- Pavements in the central part of Constitution St at North Leith church must be maintained at 2 metres wide or more. Any provision of loading facilities which reduced either pavement below this would be unacceptable.
- There is some shared cycle/pedestrian space proposed at Newhaven (extending an already shared space). We support investigation of options to provide separate cycle and walk spaces.

D. Next steps:

- We welcome the proposed setting up of an 'Active Travel Group' to look at detailed designs, involving stakeholders such as Spokes, Sustrans, Edinburgh Access Panel and LSEG. We will contribute to this as far as possible; *however, our default position is that designs must adhere to SDG standards.*
- We understand that consultants will prepare a report identifying exceptions to the standards in the SDG, which will be shared with the Active Travel Group.
- Funding has been secured to consider cycle route options from Foot o' the Walk to Ocean Terminal. Again we will participate as necessary with this, but we query the proposition that Ocean Terminal is necessarily where most cyclists want to head to from Leith Walk at all? We expect that there will be a range of destinations for cyclists leaving Leith Walk northwards (to east and west as well as north) and these may be more important desire lines for cyclists than Ocean Terminal.
- We ask the Council to report on the evaluation of the Floating Bus Stop designs on Leith Walk.
- While we welcome the greatly-improved design of Elm Row, including the stopping-up of Montgomery Street, we suggest that a modelling exercise is undertaken in order to understand the effects of any traffic displacement on other streets in the vicinity.
- We welcome a number of potential opportunities to secure other street improvements which are beyond the immediate scope of the tram project such as: improved public realm at Ocean Terminal; traffic management of streets between Easter Road and Leith Walk; removal of the roundabout at foot of Easter Road at Leith Links; and re-instatement of historic 'Boardwalk' along the coast.
