

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

**Edinburgh Tram Inquiry Call for Evidence
Response of Living Streets Scotland**

4th August 2015

Introduction

Living Streets Scotland welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Edinburgh Trams Inquiry. Living Streets has been the leading advocate for better conditions for walkers since the charity was founded as the pedestrian society in 1929. During that time, we have been involved in developing better traffic laws and approaches to road design, including urban speed limits and safe crossings.

We view the Edinburgh trams project as significant in terms of its scale and impacts on the city. Edinburgh has high levels of walking and a public realm of world renown, although this owes much to architecture and planning of the 17th and 18th centuries, rather than recent adaptations to meet modern transportation requirements. The tram therefore presents a significant opportunity to enhance environmental quality and improve conditions for walking. As yet this positive change hasn't been achieved. This submission sets out the why these issues should be investigated in detail.

What issues should the Inquiry investigate in detail?

It is important not only to consider the costs of the scheme but also what has been delivered given the significant level of resources allocated to the project. This was a once in a generation opportunity to reshape Edinburgh's transport system. The Inquiry must consider the impact of the project on the public realm, given the disruption caused whilst streets were redesigned and rebuilt. A key component of achieving a modern, efficient, transport system is good quality public realm which supports safe, convenient and comfortable pedestrian journeys; to better facilitate walking journeys *and* as part of a multi-modal mix of walking with public transport.

The success or otherwise of the tram scheme is closely linked to accessing the service, in the vast majority of cases this will be by foot. Each and every tram journey will start and end with a pedestrian journey and adequate provision should have been made within the design and budgets to prioritise this aspect.

Living Streets Scotland team are experts in the field of pedestrian movement. From our office in central Edinburgh we have experienced and observed the scheme first hand. Our conclusion is that conditions for pedestrians have, in many areas, deteriorated and a number of bad design choices have been made which have diminished the public realm. This is a fundamental question in terms of value for money. The Inquiry shouldn't repeat the tram scheme promoter's error in seeing the tram as a purely transport project.

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Living Streets (The Pedestrian Association); Company Registration No 5368409
Registered Charity No 1108448 (England and Wales) and SC039808 (Scotland).



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What direct evidence does the public have on the consequences of the failure to deliver the project in the time, within the budget and to the extent projected?

Invariably a scheme of this scale and duration will have impacts on people using the city centre, particularly on foot. In terms of extent we reiterate that the scheme should, from the outset, have focused on transforming and improving the public realm and integrating the tram with walking journeys. Key stakeholders, including Living Streets Scotland, were not engaged in a meaningful way. Sadly there are significant, easily anticipated, and avoidable failures that have been carried through from the design stage. Each failure will now be technically challenging and expensive to rectify. These relate to:

1. Poor crossing facilities, using out-dated concepts such as barrier islands with inadequate space for volume of pedestrians (example York Place)
2. Unnecessary controlled crossings, not justified by the volume of traffic – which needlessly hinder pedestrian movement (example St Andrews Square)
3. Significant impacts on existing signalised crossings, causing extensive delays for pedestrians and dangerous crowding at junctions. This has led to risky crossing behaviour due to frustration (example Princes Street)
4. Conflicts with cyclists through poorly designed shared space (St. Andrews Square, / North St. Andrews Street)
5. Poor routes and integration between the tram route stops and major destinations and interchanges, creating indirect and diversionary routes to major facilities (Examples include: Gyle Shopping Centre / Edinburgh College / Bankhead Stop and Waverley railway station / St. Andrews Square)
6. Generally, worse conditions for walkers and cyclists in terms of safety, convenience and comfort (example Haymarket)

Inquiry issues

Living Streets Scotland believes that the resulting failure of the scheme in relation to the public realm means that the scheme has not achieved value for money in the following areas:

Initial proposals (1)

- Were the objectives clear and sufficiently broad?
- Was improving the public realm integral to the aims of project?
- Did the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance assist in assessing the wider implications of the project?

Procurement (2)

- Was there adequate urban design expertise in the team?

Design (3)

- What efforts were made to resolve conflicts with pedestrian movement and optimise access by foot to the trams?

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Local Governance (8)

How local organisations with design expertise were engaged in the design process and whether their views were taken account of

National Governance (9)

The role played, if any, of national organisations with a remit to promote and improve the public realm

How the design incorporates key guidance, especially the Scottish Government's Designing Streets Policy

Costs (10)

Whether the final budgets were adequate in relation to delivering improvements to Edinburgh's public realm

Consequences (11)

The key issues for residents in terms of pedestrian movement, particularly after the scheme was completed

Conclusions

The tram Inquiry is broad and seeking to address multiple issues. Within this the issues of place making, impact on the public realm and integrating journeys, particularly with walking, should be given due consideration.

The vast majority of tram passengers will access the system on foot. Therefore, well designed provision for pedestrians is fundamental to the project's long term viability. Continental tram systems are integrated within quality streetscapes which support and encourage high levels of walking and related economic activity. Few sections of the tram route have, as yet, delivered similar levels of improvements. The reasons for this failure need to be understood, as similar light rail / metro / dedicated bus way systems could have an important part to play in transforming Scotland's cities.

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