

TRAMLINE 'FILLERS'

Spokes Note June 2017

People frequently suggest use of plastic or other tramline 'fillers.' It sounds easy, cheap, simple and obvious, so the idea keeps cropping up in the press and on social media.

However, we understand that Edinburgh Trams has investigated a variety of makes and not found any which are effective, can withstand tram wheel pressure, and, most importantly, which work on the type of rail used in Edinburgh's *onroad* tram sections (there are successful options for offroad sections). If anyone knows of some which do work well in this type of rail, please contact Edinburgh Trams.

One of our members, Stephan Matthieson, has done some internet research on this, and his conclusions are as follows ...

- Perhaps most significantly, they all require a different kind of track cross-section to that used in the Edinburgh onroad sections, so it would mean relaying the tracks. There are a few products that claim to be for existing tracks, but as far as I could see they are all student projects in engineering and such that have not actually been tested on busy roads. [Note that relaying the tracks would be hugely costly and disruptive given the way they have been laid].
- Heavy road traffic damages them, so they are suitable for pedestrian or cycle crossings but not really on major roads.
- They are very expensive (in Zürich it was 300,000€ for 90 metres of track at a tram stop), so doing that from St Andrews Sq to Haymarket costs several millions. It would be cheaper and far more effective to install protected bike lanes.
- They only stop wheels getting into the groove, but not slipping on the wet metal, or in the cracks along the cracks. Many of Edinburgh's tramline crashes are thought to be due to skidding rather than falling into the tracks.
- They do nothing to address the wider problem of road layout (pinch points, overtaking etc.)
- They are mostly used at short crossings where a path crosses the track, e.g. at tram stops (also for people with high heels), but are ineffective and not used where cyclists have to cycle along the track for a longer section. In Edinburgh many tramline crashes are not at crossing points, but where a cyclist travelling parallel to the lines moves sideways, often as a result of traffic pressures such as a bus or taxi moving out.

We would be happy to update this note if there is further useful information.