

Trams from Granton to the Edinburgh BioQuarter / Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and Beyond Strategic Business Case

[CEC Transport & Environment Committee 10.9.26, agenda item 7.6¹](#)

Written deputation from Spokes

Exec Summary

[2 below] A big lesson from the Leith Walk section of the **Newhaven extension** is that separated bike lanes can bring significant *pedestrian* casualty reduction, in addition to preventing cyclist tramline crashes. A lesson from Foot of Walk to Ocean Terminal is that parallel cyclist routes (to avoid tramlined roads where segregation is not possible) must be integrated into the tram project, or risk years of delay after the start of tram operation.

[3 below] There is very strong Spokes membership support for a **northern extension**, but with roughly equal differing views on which of the two options it should use, or whether both are acceptable. For both route options, there remain substantial disadvantages to safe and/or enjoyable cycling, which will need to be addressed to the maximum extent possible if either option goes ahead.

[4 below] The **southern route**, which is now likely to be the Council immediate priority, and is heavily used by cyclists, presents extreme difficulties in ensuring safe cycling. We argue for single track running for the Bridges section, and segregated bike lanes south of St Patrick Square – the latter hopefully bringing the same casualty avoidance benefits seen by both pedestrians and cyclists on the fairly similar Leith Walk.

1. Introduction

Spokes has the objective of promoting cycling as part of an overall sustainable transport and access strategy. As such, we support a growing tram system for Edinburgh, provided cycling is well catered for in the project design and operation.

We understand that councillors are likely, at this meeting, as recommended by officers, to prioritise the south section, from City Centre to Bioquarter (recommendation 1.1.3) whilst still intending the northern extension to Granton, pending further work on route options (recommendation 1.1.4). We are not entirely clear from the papers (4.47) whether the next stage recommendation means to solely work on the south section outline business case, or to also continue outline work on north section route options, particularly given that the combined cost is much lower than undertaking them separately.

2. Lessons from the original line and the Newhaven extension

Integration of tram with other modes, and cycling in particular, should be a central concern from the outset, and we are concerned that lessons from the Newhaven extension should be followed, rather than the cycling-unaware 'tram only' approach which was taken for tramline one (despite our best efforts). The tramline one layout has incurred many tramline crashes, [a tragic death²](#), [many injuries³](#), and [successful claims to the Council⁴](#), which continue to this day. Tramline dangers were discussed in detail in our [18.6.26 TEC deputation⁵](#).

1 <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=8122&Ver=4>

2 <https://www.spokes.org.uk/2022/06/zhi-min-soh-tramline-safety/>

3 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00402-018-2890-4>

4 <https://www.scottishlegal.com/articles/cyclists-win-personal-injury-claims-following-accidents-on-edinburgh-trams>

5 <https://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/260618-8.1-Spokes-deputn-1.pdf>

The eventual remedial treatment of some blackspots has reduced crash numbers. However, some 50% of crashes are not at blackspots but at random locations to cyclists riding in the same direction as the tramlines, often resulting from traffic pressures, so are not amenable to blackspot treatment and represent a basic flaw in the layout design.

Furthermore, there is also significant evidence from a [Spokes member survey](#)⁶ that the presence of tramlines has deterred many cycle journeys and/or required potentially difficult or inconvenient detours. Crash numbers should be minimised through good design, not through deterring cycle (or pedestrian) use.

On the Newhaven tram extension, the TEC document [Appendix 4](#)⁷, the assessment of benefits, considers almost every conceivable aspect – except the impact on pedestrians and cyclists using the tram route. In fact, this is Edinburgh’s first onroad tram section to include [parallel bike lanes](#)⁸ (following the outcry over the original plans) and any impact analysis should cover this, seeking lessons for future schemes.

Whilst there have been undoubted problems with cycle lane detailed design, the overall results in terms of council objectives, have been very positive. First, rather than tramlines deterring cycling as happens in Princes Street, the separated bike lanes contributed to [major increases in bike use](#)⁹. Perhaps even more important, not only have bike/tramline crashes and injuries been all but eliminated, but, despite common perceptions, Leith Walk **pedestrian casualties** have also fallen drastically - see the bluesky post below from Edward Tissiman. The reasons for this are not known but, given that virtually all pedestrian injuries result from motor vehicles, we speculate that crucial factors are the separation of pedestrians from the carriageway by the cycle lanes, and safer road crossings due to the ban on kerbside parking.



Edward Tissiman
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There is a lot of chat about the danger posed by the introduction of cycle lanes and floating bus stops on Leith Walk from 2021 onward.

Pedestrian casualties, Leith Walk, by year:

2015:	15
2016:	13
2017:	9
2018:	10
2019:	12 (including two fatalities)
2020:	3
2021:	0
2022:	2
2023:	0
2024:	2

16:40 · 16 May 2026 · Everybody can reply

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A further lesson relates to the section beyond Foot of the Walk. With no space for segregated provision, an alternative protected route to Ocean Terminal was promised – to open no later than the tramline. In fact it was not until March 2026, three years after the tram service began, that the first stage of this cycleroute (reaching Dock Street) was opened; with no clear date for the final section to Ocean Terminal.

Finally, we recognise that the full [Strategic Business Case](#)¹⁰ (SBC) by Jacobs Steer does begin to take account of tram integration with other modes (3.3.4) including cycling, albeit we would hope to see more on tramline dangers and consequences in some of the detailed analysis tables. The recognition of the dangers of enforced cyclist tramline crossings at tram stops is particularly welcome (penultimate para of 3.3.4) – we had highlighted the severe risks if a tram stop is adjacent to the kerb, thus compelling cyclists to cross and recross the lines at very dangerous angles.

6 <https://www.spokes.org.uk/2026/09/spokes-members-views-on-tramline-city-centre-controversies/>

7 <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s102789/Item%207.6%20-%20Trams%20from%20Grantontothethe%20Edinburgh%20BioQuarter-Royal%20Infirmary%20of%20Edinburgh%20-%20Appendix%204.pdf>

8 <https://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/1809-28-CEC-news-release.pdf>

9 <https://bsky.app/profile/edtiss.bsky.social/post/3mskrtwtbo22l>

10 <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s102908/Item%207.6%20-%20Trams%20from%20Grantontothethe%20Edinburgh%20BioQuarter-Royal%20Infirmary%20of%20Edinburgh%20-%20Appendix%202.pdf>

3. Northern section, Granton to City Centre

Given that the southern section is now likely to be built first, we will only comment briefly at this stage on the northern section. Most of the comments in our [2025 consultation response](#)¹¹ remain valid. However, there are two subsequent developments, as follows...

3.1 Consultation outcomes

We were [very pleased to note](#)¹² that in its [Annex 4](#)¹³ comments on the 2025 consultation outcomes, the council responded positively to two of our top issues with the Roseburn option...

- The annex states that it “*would not be difficult*” to **remove the pinch-point** in the busy area south of the Roseburn Bridge over the A8 – this being one key objection to the consultation plans (albeit the Telford Road pinch point will be looked at in detail, but would be problematic)
- The idea of including in the tram project a **bridge over the mainline railway** (which is already a Council Mobility Plan objective) was received very positively. It would “*provide a vital link, encourage increased use of sustainable transport modes, supporting wider regeneration and ... deliver substantial long-term benefits for connectivity.*” Albeit there would be technical and cost implications requiring a full feasibility study.

3.2 Spokes member views

Given the high level of controversy, Spokes Planning Group has always taken the position that, whilst we support the need for the northern extension, we are not specifying the route option. Rather, whichever the Council chooses, we will seek the best possible conditions for cycling (and walking/wheeling) on both the tram route and the non-tram route.

However, due to the high levels of controversy, it was decided to conduct a membership survey, the results of which are [here](#)¹⁴. The results provide strong endorsement of the Spokes position.

In summary, of 223 responses...

- There is very strong agreement (over 80%) on a northern extension
- 30% of members find both route options acceptable, whilst marginally over a quarter (27%) say it must be via Orchard Brae, and marginally under a quarter (23%) say it must be via Roseburn
- Thus, in total, 57% find the Orchard Brae route acceptable, and 53% the Roseburn route, a difference well within 95% confidence levels [this is graphed in our report, linked above]

It is interesting to note that the views of Spokes members appear well aligned with those of the general public, according to the Council’s own independently-run representative sample survey. This found almost identical levels of support for the Roseburn and the Orchard Brae options, although the self-selected consultation results, as is well known, did find significantly higher opposition to using Roseburn.

3.3 Remaining concerns

Finally, we wish to reiterate some of our main concerns which remain after the 2025 consultation...

11 <https://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2511-CEC-tram-G-B-Spokes-FINAL.pdf>

12 <https://www.spokes.org.uk/2026/06/tram-consultation-next-steps/>

13 <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s100197/Item%208.1%20-%20Trams%20from%20Granton%20to%20the%20BioQuarter-Royal%20Infirmary%20of%20Edinburgh%20and%20Beyond%20Consultation.pdf>

14 <https://www.spokes.org.uk/2026/09/spokes-members-views-on-tramline-city-centre-controversies/>

Roseburn route

- Even with single-track battery-operated tram, its introduction will have a major negative effect on the natural surroundings and ambience, which many people value greatly
- It seems probable that a 2m pinch point will remain for the whole length of under Telford Road bridge
- A great deal will depend on detailed design, notably at the former Roseburn pinch point, and we will comment further at that stage
- No appraisal has been made of the impact of the tram on cycling numbers, during or after construction

Orchard Brae route

- Removing existing cycling infrastructure and installing tramlines, particularly given several difficult junctions, will pose serious dangers to cyclists (see our tramline dangers submission)
- Dean Bridge poses a particular danger, which should be minimised by single tracking and battery operation
- A great deal will depend on detailed design and we will comment further at that stage
- No appraisal has been made of the impact of the tram on cycling numbers, during or after construction

4. Southern section, City Centre to Bioquarter

It appears almost certain, despite the structural and other concerns of [World Heritage](#)¹⁵ and others, that the Council will decide that the tram route to Bioquarter should use the Bridges route. Whereas Spokes also had previously suggested alternatives, we will therefore now comment solely on this route.

4.1 First, the East End junction is of great concern. The Mobility Plan promises quality cycle connections here, but the SBC (4.4.3) now casts doubt on this happening, stating that “*segregated cycling infrastructure cannot be accommodated on the north side of east Princes Street*” and that “*while provision on the south side may be possible, this would create conflicts with bus stops and access to Waverley Steps and the Balmoral Hotel.*”

Connections to and from Princes Street are vital and, in the north-south direction we point out that large numbers of cyclists commute or travel to Leith from south east Edinburgh.

4.2 Second, as we made clear in our [TEC written deputation of 18.6.26](#)¹⁶, the Bridges route poses very severe challenges in ensuring safe cycling. We ask those involved in developing the plans to take full cognisance of that written deputation, which pointed out a serious of dangers, most notably with kerbside tram stops, and suggested ameliorations.

The SBC (section 3.3.4) does to some extent recognise these challenges...

“On the South East corridor, the Council’s Our Future Streets (Circulation Plan) has prioritised the Bridges corridor route for public transport and pedestrians, with segregated cycling delivered on parallel routes. Nevertheless, between North Bridge and Salisbury Place, the tram design will seek to incorporate safer cycling features. These may include cycle bypasses at tram stops, avoiding the need to cross tram tracks, and advanced stop lines and early release signals at key junctions.”

We urge the Council to go further, and make every effort to incorporate segregated bike lanes or, at the very least, ensure a reasonable distance between kerblines and tramtracks so that, for example, it is relatively safe for cyclists to pass stopped buses or other vehicles.

15 <https://www.facebook.com/100064492488076/posts/1518281810331554/?mibextid=rS40aB7S9Ucbxw6v>

16 <https://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/260618-8.1-Spokes-deputn-1.pdf>

4.3 From North Bridge to St Patrick Square, or at the very least to Nicolson Square, in order also to widen footways significantly, we urge the council to consider single-track tram, and battery operation,. This is promised for the Roseburn section (should that go ahead) and so should be feasible here also. We were somewhat encouraged that, when the consultation report was [debated at TEC on 18.6.26](#)¹⁷, senior officer Deborah Paton stated that battery operation would be used on the Bridges, to avoid the space required by tramline poles, but single-tracking here would provide much greater width for active travellers.

It was also stated at that TEC that general traffic would be removed from the Bridges corridor (we are unclear over what distance) and this too would be an absolute minimum need. As mentioned above, kerbside tram stops should be an absolute 'no' (unless able to be bypassed).

4.4 South of St Patrick Square, even with dual tram tracks, Spokes believes that there is space to retain segregated bike lanes given sufficient restrictions on general traffic. The position here is not too different from Leith Walk which, as discussed in (1) above, has been **highly successful in improving both pedestrian and cyclist safety**. The less positive experience of Leith Walk in terms of detailed design could also be used to improve the detailed design of the footway and cycleway here.

4.5 Beyond Cameron Toll, it is already agreed that cycle segregation will be provided. This has been a separate project, lying in the filing cabinet for some years waiting decisions on the tram. Assuming those decisions are made today, we urge that the cycle project goes ahead as soon as possible.

4.6 Parallel Routes - The SBC refers to "*segregated cycling (to be) delivered on parallel routes*" (see quote above). Given the Trams to Newhaven experience of a parallel route from Foot of the Walk to Ocean Terminal (see (1) above) such an optimistic statement must be tied down. We note that the west-side route, Meadows to George Street, has been delayed interminably and is now apparently undergoing further redesign, so it is difficult to maintain confidence in its promise until it is delivered. The east-side route is not even a current project as far as we know. To ensure its delivery, it should be made part of the tram project, not a separate project as happened in Leith.

5. Conclusion

Spokes welcomes the continued expansion of the tram service.

We note the remarkable success of the Newhaven extension in drastically cutting pedestrian and cyclist casualties in the Leith Walk section, and urge that these lessons are applied to the proposed southern route and any other future sections.

We emphasise that the southern route, particularly from Princes Street to St Patrick Square, poses extreme difficulties for ensuring safe and enjoyable travel by bike, and we challenge the Council and consultants to make that happen!

Finally, we support continued work on options for the northern section.

¹⁷ <https://www.spokes.org.uk/2026/06/tram-consultation-next-steps/>