

Report Title: Edinburgh Tram Network
Issue Date: 2 April 2006
Client/Developer: Transport Initiatives Edinburgh (tie)
Lead Designer: Dundas and Wilson / System Design Services (SDS)
Local Authority: City of Edinburgh Council
Location: Edinburgh
Planning Ref.:
Details: Design proposals for the Edinburgh Tram Network, including related public realm and infrastructure



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INTRODUCTION

This report relates to designs for the tram network for Edinburgh. The project was presented to an A+DS Design Review panel on 20 March 2007.

The project was presented on behalf of tie by representatives of Dundas and Wilson, and System Design Services (SDS).

The meeting was also attended by representatives of City of Edinburgh Council and Historic Scotland.

A+DS VIEWS

1. Design vision

1.1 We support the project but feel it has not taken full advantage of the tremendous opportunity it offers. We recognise that some aspects of the design are well advanced and that, amongst other things, the Tram Design Manual has been published and the Tram Design Working Group has been in operation. Despite this, the project lacks design vision. It appears to be dictated by technical engineering requirements, and financial considerations seem to be hindering greater design opportunities.

1.2 There is little evidence that options have been explored for different elements in various locations, and we question how it is possible to assess design quality when there is a lack of such information. The scale of the project merits the development of prototypes and mock ups, along with other visual imagery, to enable considered analysis of design proposals.

1.3 The project is fundamental to the future development of the city. We recommend that the City conceive it in tandem with other strategic exercises that consider the spatial vision for future growth, what form this might take, and the appropriate density of development along the route of the tram.

2. Wider context

2.1 The installation of the tram system can be a catalyst to change the city for the better, provided it is not considered as a project in isolation. A holistic approach needs to be taken to co-ordinate and integrate it with wider initiatives. For example, where presently the tram lies between masterplan areas it should be conceived as the opportunity to develop the public realm, and stitch different areas together. We encourage the Council to better integrate the tram installation into a wider urban design or public realm strategy.

2.2 There does not appear to be a townscape analysis of the consequences of a reduced number of buses or how the tram integrates with the bus system. Further work is also required to develop the vision for major transport interchanges.

3. Public realm

3.1 It is not presently clear how the tram installation will be integrated with, or instigate, an improved public realm. A project of this magnitude demands a significant budget for associated public realm works.

3.2 We recognise the need to develop technical solutions but are concerned that townscape implications have not received adequate attention, and that information being issued for pricing is not sufficiently advanced. Engineering models developed for raised and / or offset platforms and substations surrounded by chain link fences may satisfy basic requirements but are unlikely to be as resolved as they should be to take account of various contextual issues.

3.3 Although urban design has been an integral part there has been an imbalance in the project that has favoured engineering considerations. We welcome the appointment of a Tram Planning Design Manager, and of urban designers to advise on public realm issues.

3.4 Unique or iconic structures would contribute to the character and personality of the tram and enhance the experience for tourists, visitors and other users. There is an opportunity for the individual design of tram stops, or the introduction of art works, as is the case in other cities.

CONCLUSION

We thank the presenters for attending. We are keen to ensure that the project is as successful as it should be. We recognise there are engineering and budgetary constraints but are concerned at the lack of design vision. We believe the opportunity still exists within the process for design to feature more prominently in the development of the proposals. The appointment of design consultants to advise on the integration of the tram network with the wider public realm presents the possibility to widen the design vision and address our concerns.

We look forward to seeing the project again.

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