



Transport and Environment Committee
City of Edinburgh Council
Sent Via E-mail

8th September 2026

Since July 2024, I have had the privilege of representing Edinburgh North and Leith. In one part of the constituency the benefits of the trams to local people and businesses are being realised every day, in another part of the constituency the potential benefits of the tram are well known but need political support to become a reality.

Success of Trams to Newhaven

In and around Leith, Leith Walk and Newhaven local people and businesses have enjoyed the benefits of the tram since the extension to Newhaven was opened in June 2023. The recent closure of the line between the City Centre and Newhaven has perversely demonstrated the importance of the trams for connectivity and trade.

Over the tram closure I received a number of e-mails from residents on the increased difficulty they had in travelling to work and into the city centre generally. Most residents experienced severe delays on buses running through Newhaven, Ferry Road, the Shore, Easter Road and Leith Walk. In addition to delays, many buses were full before going up to the City Centre or leaving the City Centre before going along Leith Walk.

Similarly, although the deployment of an additional 200 Voi Bikes was welcome in the wake of the fire there was a tram to bike shift from constituents travelling to and from work which meant many Voi Bike stops were empty across Leith during the day.

In terms of the economic impact there was a visible decrease in the number of people visiting cafes, pubs and restaurants around the Shore and Leith Walk. I am aware that at least one pub and one restaurant have decided to close following the impact of poor summer sales for a second year in a row following Leith Connections project delays and now the impact of the trams.

Argonaut Books have shared data on their Instagram page which shows that in every August since 2022 their sales from July to August have increased. In August 2025, they had a 30% increase in sales compared to July 2025. However, the impact of the tram closure meant in August 2026 they saw a 5% decrease in sales compared to July 2026.

Over the last two months I have repeatedly heard from businesses and residents on the positive impact the trams have had on them. Many of those businesses and residents were sceptical in the past. This lived experience of the trams over the last few years for communities in Leith, Leith Walk, Newhaven and the Shore demonstrate the opportunity of following through on the vision that was developed through the early 2000s for trams in Edinburgh for the other side of my constituency in Granton, Pilton and Muirhouse.



The Case for Trams to Granton

The Strategic Business Case for consideration by the Transport and Environment Committee makes the case for progressing the whole of the route. Due to my constituency interest, I will focus on the route to Granton.

The proposed routes through Roseburn and Orchard Brae meet the Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) set in accordance with Strategic Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG).

TPO1 – To support inclusive and sustainable economic growth

The route between the City Centre and Granton would increase connectivity of major centres of employment such as Craighleith Retail Park, Leonardos and the Western General to the City Centre and beyond. In reverse the increased connectivity would open up employment opportunities for residents in Granton, Muirhouse and Pilton.

A number of major employers in Edinburgh have informed me of the difficulty they have in recruiting people in this area due to the lack of direct public transport connections especially to accommodate shift work.

TPO2 – To respond to climate change, delivering net zero

The route between the City Centre and Granton would increase public transport connectivity between Granton, Muirhouse and Pilton and the West of the city. At present only one bus route serves these communities and the West to the Airport.

The tram extension would help provide the option for residents to use public transport rather than private cars for intra-city and airport journeys. The option would be extended to new residents in the community through the Granton Waterfront Development.

TPO3 – To promote equality and inclusion and help tackle the city's housing emergency

The route between the City Centre and Granton would drastically increase connectivity between the rest of the city and Edinburgh College (Granton Campus). The Campus delivers over 70 qualifications in hospitality, construction, travel operations and the arts with many of the qualifications essential for key growth areas for the city and not delivered at alternative campuses.

The route to Granton would directly service three communities in the 5% most deprived areas of Scotland according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) (Muirhouse – SO1008929 and SO1008930 and Granton South and Wardieburn – SO1008919) and directly service 6 communities in the 10% most deprived areas (adding Muirhouse SO1008933, Granton and Royston Mains – SO1008921 and Granton South and Wardieburn – SO1008918).

Furthermore, the route would directly serve 12 communities which are in the 20% most deprived communities in Scotland.



TPO4 - To improve health, wellbeing and safety and TPO5 - To protect and enhance our environment
The route between the City Centre and Granton would improve connectivity for the whole city to the Western General which provides a range of medical specialisms including geriatric, infectious diseases, diabetes, stroke medicine and breast surgery for the whole of Edinburgh and is the regional cancer centre for the whole of the South East of Scotland.

The route could also see a major upgrade to the Roseburn Path which at present is poorly lit and unsafe during the dark.

In addition, there is considerable development planned across the area. The Granton Waterfront Development which will deliver 3,500 new homes and the Art Works which will help open up Scotland's National Collection. Ensuring that the trams are extended to Granton will help the public transport network to cope with the increase in demand from these developments alone. A number of these public and private investments have been made on the understanding over the last two decades that the tram network would extend to Granton in one form or another.

Current Position

Despite widespread political support for the trams at various points over the last three decades, it is clear that political will for the route to Granton is falling. I also suspect that there will be calls at the Transport and Environment Committee to only proceed with the South route for trams to the Bioquarter.

Taking such a decision would entrench the inequality and poverty experienced by too many in Granton, Muirhouse and Pilton. Such a decision would be based on political will, not the facts. The Strategic Business Case sets out the performance of both the North route to Granton and the South route to the Bioquarter against the TPOs and the STAG criteria. The appraisals were favourable for both routes and is demonstrated by the analysis below.

Table 1: Analysis of Multi-Criteria Assessment Framework Scoring Framework for each route (Section 4.5.6 of Strategic Business Case)

Benefit/ Impact	Roseburn	Orchard Brae	South East Corridor
Major Benefit (+++)	2	0	2
Moderate Benefit (++)	9	6	10
Minor Benefit (+)	2	4	2
No benefit or impact (0)	1	6	1
Minor cost or negative impact (-)	1	2	3
Moderate cost or negative impact (--)	3	0	0
Major cost or negative impact (---)	0	0	0

Table 2: Analysis performance against STAG Criteria (Section 4.5.7 of Strategic Business Case)



Benefit/ Impact	Roseburn	Orchard Brae	South East Corridor
Major Benefit (+++)	3	2	3
Moderate Benefit (++)	8	7	7
Minor Benefit (+)	4	4	5
No benefit or impact (0)	5	3	3
Minor cost or negative impact (-)	1	6	5
Moderate cost or negative impact (--)	2	1	0
Major cost or negative impact (---)	0	0	0

Next Steps

At the Transport and Environment Committee on Thursday 10th September, I encourage Elected Members to proceed with the officer recommendations on Agenda Item 6.

For the past three decades there has been wide spread support for the vision and ambition for trams to run between the City Centre and Granton in one form or another. Councillors of many groups have championed the route over the past three decades because of the transformative benefits it can have for Granton, Pilton and Muirhouse. The legacy of those Councillors is a legacy of ambition, proceeding with the officer recommendations allows that ambition to take a further step in being realised. Tearing up that ambition would entrench inequality and poverty, particularly in Granton, Muirhouse and Pilton and would be a dereliction of responsibility by Councillors.

I hope you will take the ambitious decision for Granton, Pilton and Muirhouse and the whole of Edinburgh on Thursday.

Yours sincerely,

Tracy Gilbert MP
Member of Parliament for Edinburgh North and Leith