

## Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill Committee

### 2nd Report, 2005 (Session 2)

#### Remit and membership

##### Remit:

To consider and report to the Parliament on the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill.

##### Membership:

Bill Aitken (Convener)  
Marilyn Livingstone  
Kate Maclean  
Alasdair Morgan  
Jeremy Purvis (Deputy Convener)

##### Committee Clerking Team:

###### Clerk to the Committee

Terry Shevlin

###### Support Manager

Gail Grant

#### Consideration Stage Report on the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill

##### Group 8: New Town, Broughton and Pilrig Community Council ("NTBPCC")

51. The NTBPCC represents various areas within central Edinburgh that would be impacted by the tram. Its major concern is the promoter's decision to route the tram line along a short section of Queen Street (from the end of York Place to the corner of North St David Street) rather than around the north side of St Andrew Square. In particular, it is felt that this decision will create congestion in and around Queen Street, and noise impacts for local residents. The objector also believes that the impact on Princes Street could have been avoided or minimised if the promoter had chosen to run the tram alongside existing heavy rail links between Waverly and Haymarket railway stations, or if it had opted for ground rail electrification.

52. The Committee does not believe that sufficiently compelling evidence was presented by the objector to justify its assertion that an electrified tram route would lessen the impact on Princes Street. The promoter has stated that its chosen method (using overhead wires) is a proven one and that there are inherent problems with an electrified system. Indeed, the Committee was advised that about 390 of the 400 or so light rail transport systems that operate in the world do so on overhead line electrification traction systems<sup>10</sup>.

53. The Committee also accepts the comprehensive arguments made by the promoter against sharing the heavy rail line. Network Rail has advised the

promoter that such an operation would be impossible and the Committee has no reason to doubt this. In practical terms, the Committee believes that there would be obvious limits on accessibility if the tram were to run alongside the heavy rail alignment rather than on-street.

54. The Committee has greater sympathy with the objector's concerns about the likelihood of there being increased traffic on Queen Street and surrounding streets as a result of the tram. By the admission of one witness for the promoter, of all the relevant city centre road junctions, one of the greatest impacts will be on the Queen Street and North St Andrew Street junction.<sup>11</sup> The same witness also acknowledged that in addition to the effect on traffic flows, there would be fewer delays and greater operational effectiveness if the tram did not come into Queen Street.

55. The promoter's rationale for choosing Queen Street is that it is undesirable for the tram to travel along the north side of St Andrew Square, given the square's historical and aesthetic significance.

56. On balance, the Committee accepts that there should be minimal intrusion into this area. It would be unacceptable to have the tram on the north side, given the impact this would have on the setting of the listed buildings and the severance of the square. The Committee is therefore satisfied with the promoter's justification for avoiding the north side of St Andrew Square.

57. That said, the Committee appreciates the genuine concerns about traffic impacts on Queen Street, given the possible future volume of tram and other vehicles. However, the Committee is content that the regulation of such detailed matters will, if appropriate, be examined by the relevant authorities after the Bill is enacted.

58. A further, related aspect of the NTBPCC's concerns over Queen Street is possible "wheel squeal" caused by the tram running on a tight stretch of track. The Committee is content with the promoter's assurances that wheel squeal is unlikely to occur. However, even if it does occur, the promoter has stated that it has a number of options available to address wheel squeal, for example by lubricating the track in order to reduce frictional forces. Ultimately, the promoter has confirmed that if wheel squeal occurs, noise insulation would be available for the residential properties in question.

59. The Committee appreciates the NTBPCC's concerns about the likelihood of visual intrusion in Edinburgh city centre due to the permanent infrastructure that will be required for the tram. Therefore, the Committee welcomes the fact that the relevant department of the City of Edinburgh Council will include prior approval applications in its weekly list of planning applications<sup>12</sup>. As the weekly list is sent out to all community councils, the NTBPCC could examine this list and may be able to input into the prior approval process.

60. Accordingly, the Committee does not uphold the objection from this objector.