

City Mobility Plan revolutionises travel in Edinburgh for a greener, fairer future

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A ten-year plan to deliver a better connected, net zero carbon transport system, a healthier environment and a thriving, inclusive Capital has been published by the City of Edinburgh Council.

The City Mobility Plan has been inspired by forward-thinking cities around the world embracing challenges posed by climate change, poverty and inequality. Subject to approval at a special meeting of Transport and Environment Committee on Friday (19 February) the Plan will replace Edinburgh's Local Transport Strategy, setting out a strategic approach to the sustainable and effective movement of people and goods to and around the city over the next decade.

Amongst measures included in the Plan are the commitment to encourage a change in public behaviour towards the use of sustainable transport, the expansion of the tram and mass rapid transit network, improvements to bus routes, creating 'mobility hubs' in existing communities and new developments and introducing a city operations centre to monitor traffic. Additionally, the Plan pledges to create more liveable places less dominated by motor traffic and to build on the city's network of walking, wheeling and cycling routes.

The final Plan follows several years of engagement with the public, stakeholders and partners. Most recently, a consultation in 2020 gathered more than 1,800 comments on draft proposals with support demonstrated for all policy measures.

A release from the council says that thanks to feedback it has been able to strengthen and expand upon these policy measures, which centre around three themes: People, Movement and Place. The updated Plan acknowledges the impact the COVID pandemic has had on transport demands and mobility patterns, and how a green recovery can harness the associated effects of lower traffic levels.

Alongside the adopted Local Development Plan and emerging City Plan 2030, the City Mobility Plan also champions 20-minute neighbourhoods, an internationally recognised concept where local services are within a 20-minute walk of your front door. It goes even further to envision neighbourhoods where people's daily needs can be met within a 10-minute walk or wheel from their house.

Transport and Environment Convener Councillor Lesley Macinnes said: "Edinburgh is a truly unique city in terms of its heritage, architecture and striking landscape, home to some of history's greatest innovators. Now we want to push the boundaries as we look to the future of transport and mobility here.

"The finalised City Mobility Plan recognises the need to revolutionise the way we move around the Capital if we are to tackle the host of challenges we face, both locally and on a global scale. Transport is the biggest generator of carbon emissions in Edinburgh and our commitment to be net zero carbon by 2030 depends on a step-change in the way we travel, a change which would also significantly impact on air quality, congestion and road safety.

"More than that, our approach to transport addresses poverty and the cost of travel, the barriers facing those with mobility difficulties and the economic benefits of a better-connected, liveable environment. This is a bold, forward-looking strategy, befitting of this pioneering city, which will transform our streets, neighbourhoods and connections with the rest of the world for generations to come."

Transport and Environment Vice Convener Councillor Karen Doran said: "This comprehensive vision of transport and mobility in Edinburgh has been years in the making and takes into account the needs and views of lots of different members of society, from individuals to families, businesses to freight drivers.

"We want you to be able to make sustainable transport choices easily, whether that's leaving the car at home and travelling to work by tram or spending more time in your local neighbourhood on foot, wheelchair or bike. By providing the options for clean, green and healthy travel, we're helping the public to help all of us achieve an inclusive, accessible and net zero carbon future for Edinburgh."

Having collaborated closely with residents, local groups and businesses in the development of the Plan, we want to continue to involve them as we move towards a greener, fairer and more inclusive future. By placing people at the heart of the Plan, we aim to offer everyone sustainable choices for moving around the city, helping Edinburgh meet its target of net zero emissions by 2030 and providing safer, cheaper and healthier options for every member of society.

In order to achieve this, we have set out a 'Path to 2030' and an implementation plan for policy measures

which can be delivered in the short, medium and long term. Actions include –

2023 – Delivering now, planning for the future:

Construction of tram route to Newhaven will be complete and operational; a comprehensive review of bus routes in the city will have taken place; a Low Emission Zone will be in operation; we will have introduced a Workplace Parking Levy, subject to consultation and approval; Council-owned public transport companies will have been reformed to offer better integration and value for money.

2025 – Bolder actions:

A comprehensive mass rapid transit plan for the city and region will be completed, including new bus and tram systems; the business case for a north-south tram line will be agreed, linking Granton to the BioQuarter and beyond; a new bus route network will be in place; iconic streets will become increasingly traffic free; George Street will be transformed; the development of a strategic network of walking/wheeling and cycle routes will open up active travel for all; the 20-minute neighbourhoods concept will be starting to deliver local benefits.

2030 – A city transformed:

The mass transit network, including tram, will have been extended west; the city's seven park and ride facilities will have been upgraded; some arterial routes will be used for mass commuting by bike; the city centre will be largely car-free; a comprehensive city freight and servicing operations system will be in place; the implementation of the Waverley Station Masterplan will be underway.

Once in place, the implementation plan will be monitored and regularly updated. Its success will be measured against several objectives, including an increase in the number of trips made by active and sustainable modes of travel, ensuring transport options in the city are inclusive and affordable and the reduction of harmful emissions from road transport.

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