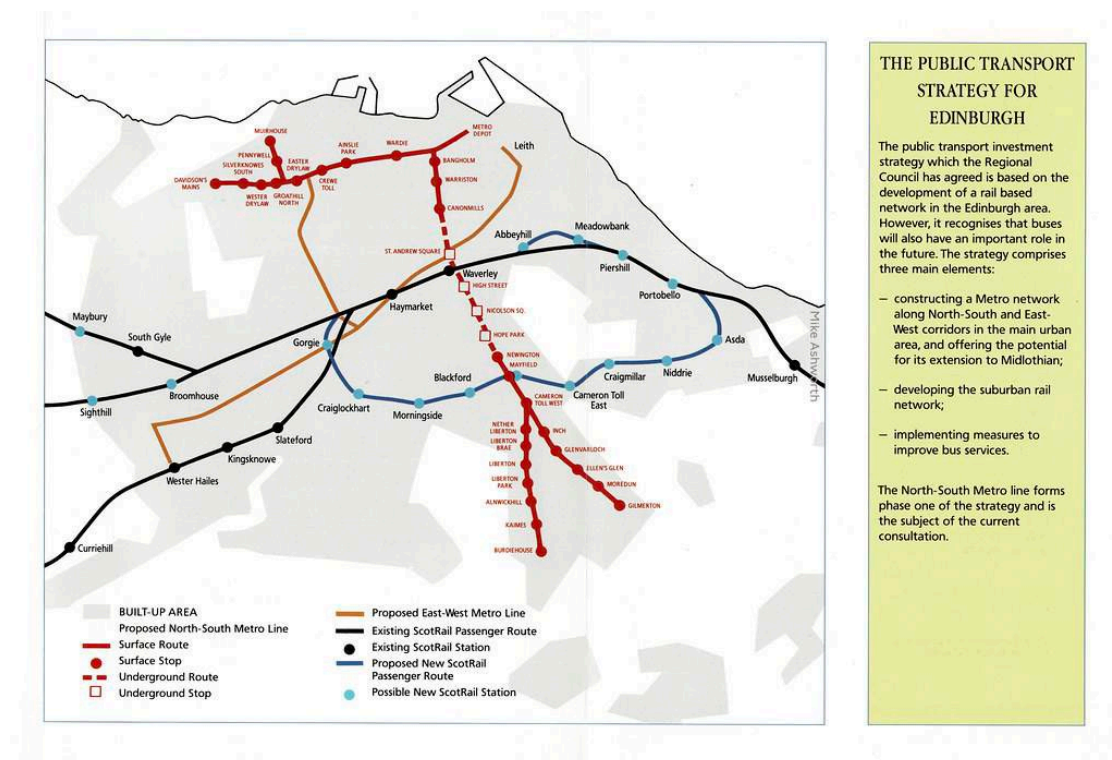




CEC Transport and Environment Committee, 10 September 2026 – Item 7.6: Trams from Granton to Edinburgh BioQuarter and Beyond

Crag was set up to campaign for better public transport, especially rail-based, in and around Edinburgh back in the heady days of 1989 when Lothian Regional Council was consulting on their North-South Metro proposal:



You can see that the general thrust of proposals hasn't changed much since then – except, of course, that Granton now features prominently in your discussions, making full use of the old Caledonian Railway alignment from Roseburn shown above. And the BioQuarter wasn't even a thing back then.

Progress on developing public transport is extraordinarily slow and costly in this country and our competitor nations have since advanced on a scale unimaginable for us back in 1989, hugely boosting their economic output and raising millions of their population out of poverty – a truly virtuous cycle.

The decisions before you today are shaped by our limited progress on those fronts. The old railway alignments of north Edinburgh were re-purposed in the meantime as active travel corridors – a welcome 'green travel' initiative. But they have always been earmarked for travel not just by individuals fit enough to cycle, walk and jog but by all.

Indeed, Parliamentary consent was obtained for use of the Roseburn to Granton alignment for trams as far back as 2006.

CRAG recognises how attractive the Roseburn corridor has become over the years since the old railway trackbed was tarmacked. And we also recognise the utility it offers to cyclists in particular as part of a growing network of paths throughout the city. The 2006 consent also recognised this.

But this utility must now be extended to those who wish to travel by modern mass transit in our increasingly congested city.

The Council have proposed that, to better address the concerns of active travellers, the tram line from Roseburn to Craighleith be only single track with the stop at Ravelston dropped – and with no overhead wires. That carries with it operational risk for the tram – but it is a compromise offered in good faith. Unfortunately, for many cyclists, it is a compromise they are unwilling to accept. This is a view both myopic and discriminatory.

Whereas today approximately 600,000 trips are made along the Roseburn corridor, the tram is projected to carry 4.25 million passengers annually by 2042. Moreover, it would not only support and drive the ongoing development of brownfield sites around Granton but would transform access to employment, education and health services for disadvantaged and deprived communities in Granton, Pilton and Drylaw.

To cap it all, building a tram line along the Roseburn corridor can be accomplished without the need to dig up streets, move utilities, etc. which bedevilled construction of Edinburgh's only current tram line from the airport to Newhaven. It, moreover, separates tram operation from general traffic – enabling a speedier and more reliable journey. And it links with the important transport hub which is Haymarket. It remains the only feasible route by which to connect Granton most efficiently to the city centre. That will not change.

So, whilst recognising the political reality in the City Chambers of minority support for the Roseburn to Granton corridor and that it is likely that the headline positive decision today will be to first proceed with the southern leg of the north-south tram route from the city centre to the BioQuarter, we would urge you, as per recommendation 1.1.4 to “Agree the need to retain ambition to deliver a mass transit connection between Granton and the city centre”.

We, of course, also support delivery of the leg from the city centre to the BioQuarter – not without its challenges but serving a corridor also long recognised as worthy of being provided with mass transit.

And, of course, this opens up the possibility of integration with the emerging tram-train proposal on the South Suburban railway line, especially at Cameron Toll – where a transport hub could be in the making.

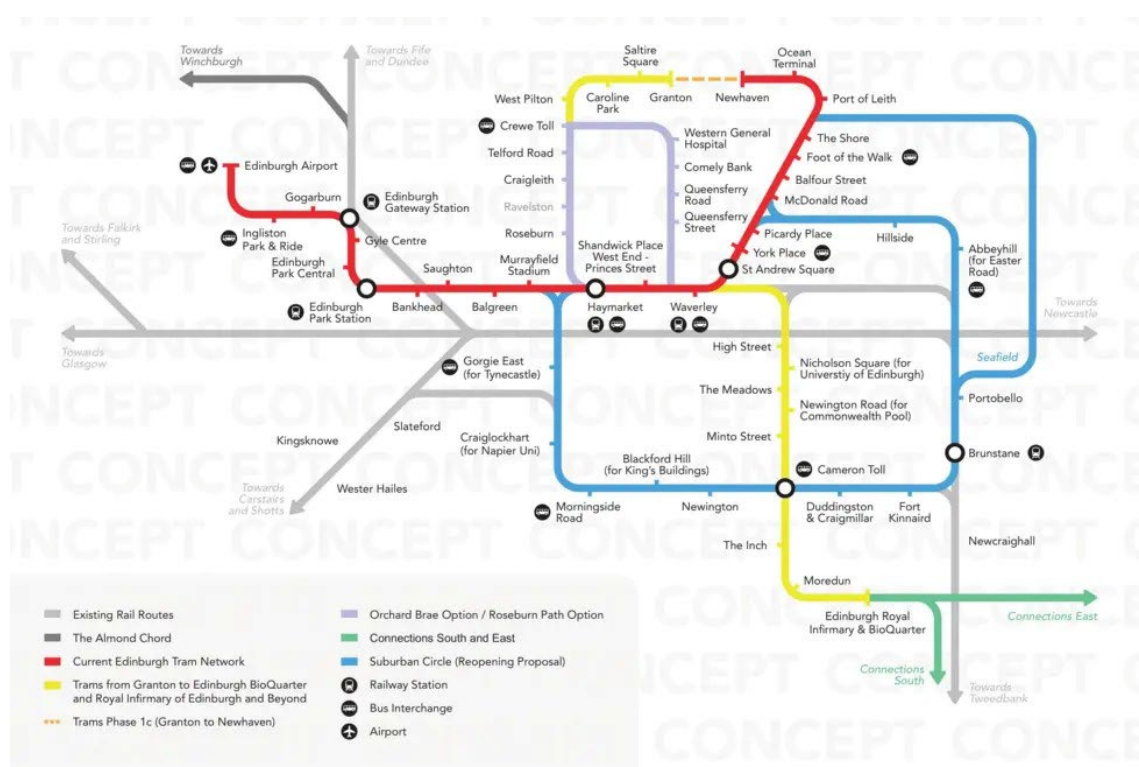
Finally, two points:

- we note that Parliamentary powers were also given in 2006 to construct a tram line from Newhaven to Granton. It's not an ideal way to connect Granton to the west of the city centre – but it would be fine for journeys to and from the BioQuarter.

Building this short section deserves serious consideration if the regeneration of the Granton area is to proceed most efficiently

- to further enable this, consideration should also be given to running such trams directly up Leith Street – with a stop at the Omni Centre – instead of via St. Andrew Square. We note that the Leith Street alignment is shown in Figure 4.4 of the papers before you today.

... and finally, finally: Cllr. Stephen Jenkinson revealed this aspirational Metro ‘concept’ map at a rail conference in Edinburgh in January of this year. It’s not official policy – but it’s always good to plant seeds for trees under whose shade, at my age, I may not live to sit. Hopefully some of you will live to see this! Transforming public transport provision in and around Edinburgh is a challenge for our time. Let’s not drop the ball this time.



We wish you well as you seek to address the many transport challenges and opportunities facing our growing city.

Lawrence Marshall

Chair

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