Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 12 October 2023

Incorrect Parking on the Tram Route

Executive/routine	**Routine**
Wards	**1 - Almond, 3 – Drum Brae/Gyle, 6 – Corstorphine/Murrayfield, 11 – City Centre, 12 – Leith Walk, 13 - Leith**

1. Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that Committee;

1.1.1 Notes the contents of this report;

1.1.2 Notes that officers will continue to investigate cost effective solutions for removing vehicles from the tram route; and

1.1.3 Discharges the motion by Councillor Rae.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

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EDINBVRGH
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Report

Incorrect Parking on the Tram Route

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report summarises the progress made on finding a solution to remove incorrectly parked vehicles from the tram line and discharges the Motion by Councillor Rae.

3. Background

3.1 On 31 August 2023, the Council approved a motion by Councillor Rae on Illegal Parking Disrupting Tram Operations. The approved motion stated that the Council:

3.1.1 Notes that there were 22 incidents of trams being delayed by illegally or irresponsibly parked vehicles in the period 7 June to 31 July 2023, and there have been further incidents in August;

3.1.2 Agrees that it unacceptable for illegally or irresponsibly parked vehicles to impede the city's public transport infrastructure, that these incidents can have a significant negative impact on the reliability and journey times of our public transport network and can bring significant inconvenience to public transport users;

3.1.3 Notes that the council's removal trucks are currently unable to operate near the tram line because of the overhead power cables;

3.1.4 Notes that, while the cost of a penalty charge notice (parking ticket / PCN) recently rose to £100, or £50 if paid within 14 days, that issuing a parking ticket does not remove the obstruction from the tram network;

3.1.5 Notes there are numerous designs of tow trucks in use in municipalities around the world, including wheel lift, hook and chain or flatbed trucks, which do not require an overhead lift and therefore may be safely operated near overhead lines;

3.1.6 Agrees that officers will urgently arrange to procure the use of one or more suitable vehicles to allow uplift of illegally or irresponsibly parked vehicles obstructing tram lines, and will ensure this service is available during tram operational hours;

3.1.7 Agrees that consideration will be given to additional measures to address the problem, including, but not limited to, consideration of:

a) Installation of physical barriers, such as bollards, correctly installed Sheffield cycle stands or planters at the worst-affected areas to prevent parking outside of a designated parking bay;

b) Increased use of parking attendants along the tram route, including travelling on trams, to facilitate enforcement;

c) Streamlined processes to allow members of the public to report potential breaches, and for this information to be passed timeously to parking attendants to allow enforcement;

d) Streamlined processes to allow photos and videos submitted by members of the public to be used in enforcement;

3.1.8 Agrees that Transport spokespeople and Leith and Leith Walk councillors will be offered a briefing from parking officers within the next month outlining progress to resolve this issue;

3.1.9 Agrees to receive a report to the next meeting of Transport and Environment Committee outlining progress to resolve this issue, and considering all the proposals outlined at paragraph 3.1.7 above, and considering whether the council's Parking Enforcement Protocol needs to be further updated to address this issue; and

3.1.10 Agrees the Transport Convenor will write to Scottish Ministers requesting that powers to set penalty charge notices, powers to use CCTV installed on trams for enforcement, and powers to allow local authorities to use mobile phone footage submitted by the public for enforcement, should all be devolved to local authorities."

4. Main report

4.1 A number of points raised in the motion were addressed in the Trams to Newhaven Update submitted in the Business Bulletin to the Transport and Environment Committee on 14 September 2023.

4.2 Many of the incidents delaying the tram are the result of inconsiderately parked vehicles protruding from layby parking and loading places, such as on Constitution Street.

4.3 To facilitate a rapid response to such incidents, improved communication and escalation processes have been put in place between relevant teams.

4.4 As stated in the Business Bulletin update, very few parking tickets are actually issued as drivers are generally very quick to move their vehicle.

4.5 However, in cases where parking tickets are issued and a vehicle needs to be removed, the Council's current fleet of removal trucks are unable to remove

incorrectly parked vehicles from the tram route where there is a danger that cranes may come close to the tram's overhead power cables during the lifting process.

4.6 In such cases, the Council has the option of utilising external contractors to move vehicles from the tram route (such as the removal contractor that the Council had on standby during the tram testing phases). However, whilst such provisions are currently in place, the response times for such contractors are generally slow and dependent on the availability of resources when not covered by costly standby arrangements.

4.7 Benchmarking with other Council's in the UK has identified various potential removal solutions, all of which are detailed further in Appendix 1.

4.8 It should be noted that some options in Appendix 1 do not appear to be economically beneficial to explore any further.

4.9 Officers have identified a further option which side lifts vehicles. This type of vehicle is predominantly utilised in mainland Europe. Officers will continue to investigate this option and ascertain if it is compliant for use in the UK and what the associated costs may be.

4.10 Whilst it is clearly unacceptable for vehicles to block the tram route, there are few safe options available to ensure that vehicles can be swiftly removed from the tram route at a reasonable cost, without safety hazards, risking further damage or liability or creating additional problems that may further delay the Tram.

4.11 Currently the most cost efficient and proportionate option available to the Council to facilitate a removal or a potential repositioning from the tram route would be utilising wheel skates.

4.12 This approach involves attaching wheel skates or dolly wheels to each wheel of the incorrectly parked vehicle so that it can be pushed out of the parking place and relocated to another area for it to be loaded or lifted onto a removal vehicle.

4.13 Should the offending vehicle be parked poorly outwith the confines of a designated parking place it is considered that a more efficient approach may be to utilise the wheel skates to push the vehicle into the available space if it was possible and safe. Officers will work with the enforcement contractor to develop a protocol for such action if it is considered appropriate.

4.14 There are limitations with this approach because it can be time consuming to deploy the equipment and attach the wheel skates to the vehicle. It is also a labour-intensive manual process to push the vehicle by hand, body work can be damaged if pushed in the wrong place and it can be difficult to control a vehicle when moving it, particularly where the road surface is not flat or in good condition.

4.15 However, the Council have the relevant equipment and will continue to work with Tram colleagues to further consider the suitability of utilising this method and if appropriate develop training and necessary safety certification.

4.16 Officers will continue to explore all options and identify if any other cost-effective measures can be introduced during the final year of the Council's current contract

for the Provision of Decriminalised Traffic and Parking Services, which expires in September 2024.

4.17 The Council's specification for the next contract is currently being finalised and all potential future suppliers will be asked to outline how they propose to manage vehicle removals from the tram route as part of their tender bid.

4.18 As noted in the Business Bulletin update in September, the Council has recently increased the frequency of Parking Attendants patrolling the tram route and also have arrangements in place with Lothian Buses and Edinburgh Trams for Parking Attendants to travel on buses and trams to rapidly attend and deter incorrect parking.

4.19 An online form is in place so that incorrect parking can be easily reported by the public, with such information being sent directly to the Council's enforcement contractor for attention.

4.20 Members of the public can continue to report incorrectly parked vehicles through the Council's website and through other established contact channels. The Council welcome any evidence of incorrect parking submitted through these channels, but photos and videos, received from members of the public, cannot currently be used for enforcement purposes.

4.21 However, it should be noted that Officers will write to Transport Scotland requesting additional powers to utilise camera enforcement for some parking contraventions, including those affecting the Tram, and we will reference the possibility to utilise evidence provided by members of the public for enforcement purposes.

4.22 It is not considered necessary to amend the Parking Enforcement Protocol as enforcement of the Tram route is already considered a very high priority.

5. Next Steps

5.1 The Council will continue to investigate potential removal options and contact other tram operators to identify potential solutions that may resolve the issues included within Councillor Rae's motion.

6. Financial impact

6.1 There are no immediate financial impacts as a result of this report, however additional costs may be incurred should additional vehicle removal equipment be deemed necessary in the future.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

7.1 There is no equality, human rights (including children's rights) or socio-economic disadvantage implications as a result of this report.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

8.1 There are no climate or nature emergency implications as a result of this report.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

9.1 There are no known risk, policy, compliance, governance or community impacts arising as a result of this report.

10. Background reading/external references

10.1 None.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Removing Vehicles from Tram Tracks

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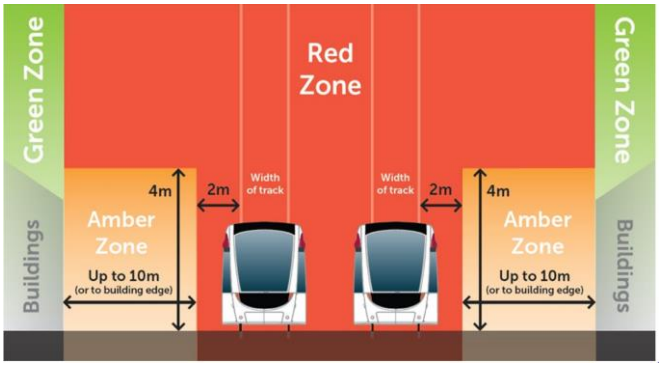
Background

The Council's current removal vehicle fleet consists of six trucks which operate using a hydraulic crane to lift incorrectly parked vehicles onto the flatbed of the truck.

Due to the height reached by the lifting arm when removing a vehicle, between 5 and 10m, this would come too close to the overhead power cables, around 6m, to operate safely. An overhead wire does not need to be touched to cause serious injury or death as electricity can jump, or arc, across small gaps. This could cause; fire, explosions, electric shocks and/or burn injuries to anyone touching the machinery or equipment, such as operatives, or members of the public in the vicinity.

There are strict guidelines when working in the vicinity of the Tram line or when operations are likely to enter the red zone. Previously, the Tram Team has confirmed that the current removal vehicles are unsuitable for working in close proximity to the tram track and overhead power cables.



Red Zone:
Work within this zone **will require prior authorisation** and will interface with the tram network. Work may require isolation of the network.
Amber Zone:
Work within this zone **may require prior authorisation** and may interface with the ET network or pose a risk of injury or fatality to persons.
Green Zone: Work within this zone will **not normally require prior authorisation**.

Standard Conditions

Due to the nature of such removals, where vehicles are blocking the tram line, operations will encroach into the red zone where there is a greater risk of injury or fatality. In addition, as prior authorisation is required; full training requires to be undertaken in advance, HSE risk assessments and procedures need to be designed and approved plus Tram operations may also require to be suspended to isolate the network before any removal operation could commence.

Methods

There are many different vehicle removal systems in use around the world, but many are designed to assist with breakdowns or after accidents. Meaning that the driver is usually in attendance and access can be gained to the vehicle concerned to remove the handbrake or the steering lock, if required. Plus, in the case of accident recovery, removing a vehicle while avoiding any further minor bumps and scuffs is less of a concern than when relocating an incorrectly parked car in relation to damage claims.

Some of the options which are available to the Council are summarised below, with potential issues being highlighted as appropriate:

1. **Winch Flatbed Trick (Hook and Chain)**

While this approach avoids a crane rising too close to the overhead power cables, vehicles would likely need to be dragged out of parking places, possibly at an angle, so that the vehicle can then be winched onto the flat bed of the truck.

Dragging a vehicle at an angle is not the recommended best practice (which is a straight pull) and doing so may cause; Health and Safety issues, damage the vehicle being removed or risk it toppling over.

2. **Wheel Lift**

This approach generally involves a tow truck with a hydraulic rear lift that can be lowered to lift the front wheels of a vehicle off the road and tow it away.

This would avoid issues with overhead power cables, but requires access to the vehicle to remove the handbrake for safe towing. Access is also required to the vehicle as this technique may not be able to remove a car parked between other vehicles.

3. Tow Track Vehicle

A third-party supplier can provide a Tow Track vehicle which is a remotely controlled and operated hydraulic lifting system, thus personnel are not in contact with lifting equipment and at risk should there be an electrical strike. The unit runs on tracks and uses hydraulics to completely lift a vehicle just two feet off the ground, essential for the recovery of electric and automatic vehicles. Thus, it potentially could safely work under the trams overhead power cables.

However, the unit is based in Glasgow and if deployed would take approximately 90 minutes to travel to Edinburgh and possibly arrive after the vehicle in question has left the scene. The unit may not be able to deal with larger or heavier (>2.2 tons) vehicles and those parked between other vehicles, as straight access from the front or rear of the vehicle is required to successfully lift.