

Topic Sheet No. 3

TRAMS AND PEDESTRIANS

EVERY PUBLIC transport passenger is also a pedestrian. Trams are a high-quality form of transport allowing people to make journeys further than is practicable on foot without using a car.

➤ Trams can run sensitively in restricted city centre streets. Shopping streets can be pedestrianised and still have people brought in and out by public transport. Trams, running on electricity, produce no exhaust and are quiet - although they have gongs to warn people of their presence

➤ Unlike buses, trams follow a predetermined path, set by their rails, from which they cannot deviate or swerve. As long as the tram's 'swept path' is marked on the ground, people know they can stand close and yet be perfectly safe.

➤ Because trams are so acceptable in pedestrianised streets, they provide a degree of surveillance where chain-store-dominated High Streets are dead after closing time - much better than the desperate measure of letting cars back in in the evening!

➤ Trams are potentially the most accessible form of public transport for elderly and disabled people, with low floors, precise alignment with platforms and a smooth ride. If access is made easy for disabled people, it is easy for everyone.

➤ This emphasises the need for crossing points and foot access to stops to be of high quality; direct, step-free and unobstructed - and the stops must not obstruct the footway for passers-by! Passengers are pedestrians too!

➤ For the benefit of passengers walking to the tram, stops should be positioned close to centres of activity and homes, with clear, direct paths leading to them. The more direct the path to the stop, the larger its catchment area. However, for people who are unable to walk far, stops should not be too far apart.

➤ A street-running tramway, especially if it replaces bus services, should have stops no more than approximately 400m apart. An off-street, suburban line, where stops are also served by local buses, provides an express service and so can have a wider spacing.

➤ People should be able to reach the stop and cross tracks without having to negotiate steps; neither footbridges nor subways are accessible. This applies equally on or off the street.

➤ New, off-street tram lines can be built with useful foot and cycle tracks alongside. However, where it is proposed for a new tram line to follow a disused railway trackbed, views of local people, walkers and cyclists must be listened to closely; disused railways have often become important local green space and even strategic off-road foot and cycle ways.

➤ The loss of such amenities may not be outweighed by the new tram line especially where there is a parallel street route with important traffic generators. It may be politically easier to build a tramway on a parkland walk than to reduce road capacity for cars, but it does not make for an efficient, accessible and sustainable city.

➤ Trams are a very pedestrian-friendly form of transport, so long as people outside the vehicle are given the same attention as those within it.

CHRIS WOOD



Trams mingle happily with pedestrians and cyclists in Karlsruhe, Germany. Buses would be unthinkable here.
Michael Taplin



A step-free crossing point on one Stuttgart's suburban tram lines.

Michael Taplin



The new tram link at Mannheim allowed a convenient and traffic-free footway to be provided alongside.
Michael Taplin