



A
Light Rapid Tramcar for the East End of Glasgow
or
“Let Glasgow Flourish Eastward”



Starting point

The heavy rain started to pour down during the final tram procession late on the afternoon of Saturday 4th September 1962 and continued for the rest of the evening as crowds and crowds of Glaswegians said a sorrowful good bye to the Victorian mode of transport that served them well and to “Let Glasgow Flourish” from the end of the previous century.

Of the estimated 250,000 + folk including many ex pats and visitors from other closed tram systems turned out that night, As a 14 year old youth, a tram driver’s son from Auchenshuggle, I was there in the rain. Listening to some of the common sentiment expressed by the adults around me that this was wrong, that George Square didn’t know what it was doing, that the shiny new Leyland buses were uncomfortable, awkward and unreliable, were not a patch on the “Cauris” they were replacing.

Little did the citizens of Glasgow know then that they would be paying for the scrappage of the trams and several fleets of replacement buses over thirty years or more later.

West Germany

Life moves on, the next year I joined the Army and soon was posted to BAOR, the industrial heartland of West Germany. The Rhine & Ruhr during the Cold War, West Germany which was still recovering from the devastating effects inflicted during the Second World War.

West Germany was now well on its way to becoming the economic miracle and the powerhouse wealth generator of Western Europe. Whilst doing my military duties there, having seen the municipal vandalism in Glasgow a few years previously, I became aware that the emerging modernised tramways along the Rhine and Ruhr with buses in support, was solidly regenerating the towns & cities that I worked in making the West German nation very wealthy indeed, to the point where we in the Army thought that although we had won the war, we had lost the peace!.

As a young soldier, I was not experienced enough then to understand why this was in depth the transport/economic relationship, other young men’s delights distracted, but sufficient interest remained enough to be cognisant of that relationship. It is interesting to note that many of these cars of the sixties are having a new lease of life in the new European countries of Poland, Romania and Bulgaria (2009)



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Now 2009

Now fifty years later, as a well travelled experienced transport consultant, I do understand this phenomenal relationship between fixed steel track and the economy repeated around the developed world and seeing it happen now in the southern half of the United Kingdom, Manchester, Croydon & Nottingham in particular.

Commonwealth Games

With a professional eye, I have looked at the Commonwealth Games Authorities transport proposals as far as the restricted details allowed. It would appear that our transport authorities have not learnt from the mistakes our city fathers made six decades previous when they accepted the biased & short term Buchanan Report, listened to the siren sounds of the bus manufacturers and their successors are hell bent in an action replay and repeating history.

With the Commonwealth Games, we have a one off transport legacy opportunity similar that to the great Empire Exhibition held in Bellahouston in 1938, which gave us the upgrade of the subway, stations Ibrox the finest stage carriage in Europe, the Coronation Car.

Although there are plenty legacy transport goodies for the rest of Glasgow, there is precious little transport legacy for the East End pro rata, a repeat of the Manchester Commonwealth Games of 2002 whose bus based transport policy was excellent and done the job. The main legacy was fatter shareholders portfolios, the remainder legacies are a collection of fading bus lanes, some road improvements and dereliction in their East End, Metrolink was promised then, but political squabbling locally and with Central Government put paid to that promise.

Metrolink will not be there until 2012+

Political unity is the order of the day now in Manchester has resulted in a bonanza of £1.4 billion for public transport

Light Rapid Tramcar - Tourist/Starter Lines

There are a growing number of Tourist/Starter tramlines up and running successfully around the world, at the last count 54 lines, some of which have now developed into systems and growing and many more planned. This variation of a very flexible mode is at the other end of the “big project” Light Rail schemes such as being expensively with much unnecessary disruption installed in the Capital. Light Rapid Tramcar uses many of the low cost techniques employed by the first generation coupled with cost saving modern methods of construction and installation which reduces dramatically disruption time and costs,



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Transport Scotland

Transport Scotland recently announced during June 2009 in a study that light rail vehicles would run over heavy rail lines and street running into St Enochs. Some of the lines also recommended for conversion are the Cathcart Circle with spurs to Neilston and Newton and importantly to East Kilbride and parts of Lanarkshire.

Bus Rapid Transport

The above study also recommends four Bus Rapid Transit corridors with segregated running be built, one going east to Carmyle/Easterhouse via Parkhead, Using a bus for corridor transport, it is clear that they have they not learnt anything over sixty years and are again hell bent on repeating the mistakes of the past.

The funding allocated for BRT would give a higher cost benefit using Light Rapid Tramcar over the lifetime of the operation.

Evidence shows that the tram has a working lifespan in many instances exceeding 125 years plus.

During this time cheap oil and polluting fossil fuels will have run out within the next 15 years + leaving a negative transport health & climate legacy.

The necessary bus technology from non fossil fuel sources are not yet affordable now and will be well into the future without massive subsidies and even in the real world are yet on the general operational horizon yet, ask the Mayor of London!

Transport Scotland must however be lauded for their progressive but limited step change in their mildly ecofriendly transport policy with the option of using secure, possibly locally generated green electricity

We should encourage Transport Scotland and others with new thinking to go further and give us a lasting transport legacy, by installing a starter Light Rapid Tramcar to the East End sharing the proposed BRT funding with segregated off road busway to ensure a real transport legacy and show the world that we still can grow Statesmen and Stateswomen and provide a low cost, green, steel on steel, public transport to “Let Glasgow Flourish” again



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From this,

To this



A Cunarder leaving Dalmarnock Depot for Auchenshuggle



A modern LRV evolve out of tram technology

Look Forward

We still have but a short time to accomplish this before the Commonwealth Games but it can be done with good statesmanship leadership, modern thinking and learning from others who have had to grasp similar problems and have solved them by taking the longer view which spreads the costs making them highly affordable to the community

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