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Southend Council exploring possibility of electric trams



(Stock image) A tram in Nottingham city centre

SOUTHEND Council is exploring ambitious plans to revitalise the city centre which could see electric trams running visitors and residents down to the seafront.

The bold new ideas form part of the council's new city centre strategy and vision, costing £120,000 to develop, which aims to boost the city centre, seafront and businesses across the city.

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Next week, cabinet will meet to discuss ideas to revitalise the city, including new and green public transport options.

The council is looking into delivering a “light rapid transit link” from Southend Victoria Station to the seafront – among the possible schemes to achieve this would be an electric tram running along Chichester Road parallel to the High Street.

“There are no specific plans agreed, but we have had discussions about installing a tram line,” councillor Martin Terry, responsible for public protection, said.

“We need to now take seriously what we do to reduce climate change and provide new green travel options.

He added: “We are not anti-car; we are anti carbon. We want to provide realistic alternatives to people through public transport.”

Council documents state the “light rapid transport link” would have “regular connections back into the High Street”.

Among other proposals include an expansion of Southend cycle paths, including creating a cycle lane down the High Street.

Paul Thompson, owner of several seafront businesses including Pebbles One Café,

He said: “It would be good to get people from the station quickly down to the seafront, especially for us seafront traders

“But I’m not wholly sold that people who visit via train aren’t prepared to walk down the High Street.

He added: “Most people who visit Southend travel here by car, and it seems the council is trying get away from that but I’m not sure it’s what people want.”

Councillor Steven Wakefield, responsible for highways, transport, and parking, says it’s the council’s responsibility to provide green transport options.

He said: “In the face of the climate crisis, we are looking at option to create sustainable transport across the city.

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“Any automated vehicle would go down the bus route in Chichester Road which would keep it easy to access without overburdening the High Street.”

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