Cirencester Community Railway Project

In 2013, a campaign was launched to re-open the railway link between the Kemble mainline station and Cirencester which had been closed as a result of the Beeching cuts in the1960s. Reaction to the idea was at first sceptical but with the proposed development of 2350 houses on the Kemble side of Cirencester and the Climate Change emergency, opinions began to change.

The trolley bus was used for a couple of years before the line was axed.

60 years on it's hoped it will be replaced by the VLR.

Photo credit RCTS

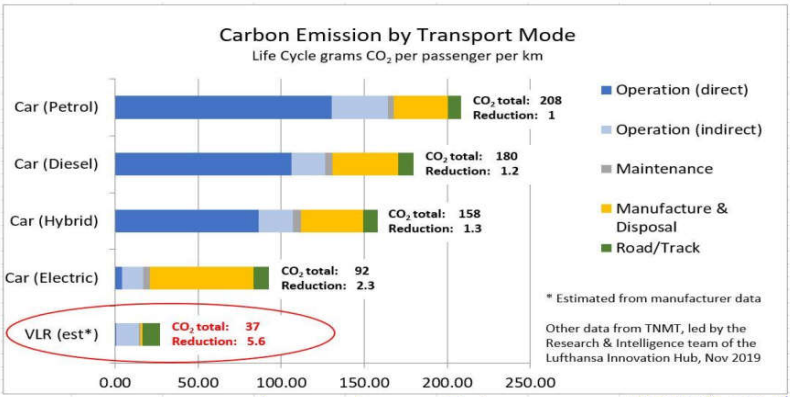
The Very Light Rail vehicle. Image from tdi.com.uk

Cirencester Community Railway Project

By 2016, a board had been set up to explore the feasibility of the project and the Warwick Manufacturing Group had put forward the suggestion that the 4 miles of line might be suitable for Very Light Railway, which was under development with a view to being used in Coventry City. The thinking was that VLR might also provide a rural solution as heavy rail costs are between £35million and £50million/km while VLR costs between £5million and £7million/km. The VLR should also encourage modal shift in a way that bus routes do not. Further, it does not produce the particulates from rubber tyres on tarmac as it is running steel on steel.

Cirencester Community Railway
Very Light Rail Environmental Credentials

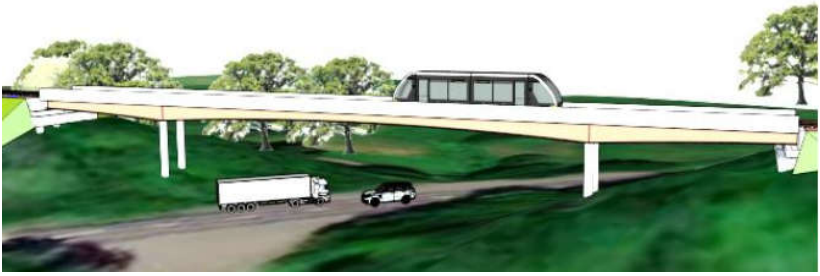
- Better than bus
- Much better than electric car – lower manufacturing impact
- Better even than tram – lower track construction impact



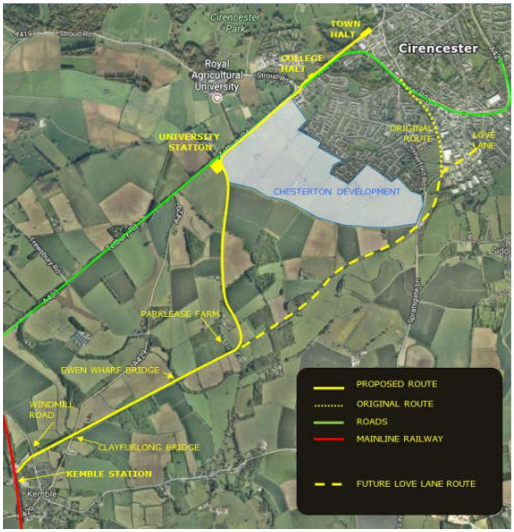
Cirencester Community Railway cirentrain.org.uk

Cirencester Community Railway Project

A local charity provided seed funding, which was matched by Cotswold District Council, Cirencester Town Council and St James's Place. This allowed the preliminary phase of the feasibility study to be carried out to ensure there were no show stoppers. There were none, so the board and their consultants EI Ltd moved on to the first phase of the study, looking into everything from passenger numbers to the safety of the old embankments and bridge design.



Propsed light-weight bridge over the A429 to replace the original Clayfurlong bridge.



With the pandemic's arrival, it was not possible to do on-the-ground passenger or public surveys. Instead Southampton University Transportation Research Group were able to model the figures to calculate a best estimateunder the circumstances. The results were encouraging. Then the government announced the

Cirencester Community Railway Project

Restoring Your Railway fund. So the Cirencester Community Railway Project applied and was promising enough to qualify in the second round of funding for £50,000 towards the next phase of the feasiblity study, essentially the detailed design of the project. A Strategic Outline Business Case has to be submitted to DfT by April 2021, demonstrating the social, environmental and economic benefits to the region around Cirencester, to show that it warrants further funding. Besides the local benefits, it is intended to demonstrate that VLR can replace the old lost rail links in rural areas with an economical and sustainable solution, restoring connectivity to isolated towns across the UK.

The system would use two vehicles initially, running in opposite directions and crossing at the University Station near the RAU. Each has 20 seats, but can carry 75 maximum during busy times. The service is planned to run every 20 minutes, and align with main line train arrivals at Kemble where possible.

For further information visit cirentrain.org.uk or listen on youtube to the talk given to the Cirencester Science and Technology Society, which answers many of your questions.

Cirencester Community Railway Project