



The Widcombe Association

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Dear Councillor,

South Bath Transport Consultation – CURO briefing

As you will no doubt be aware there is a great deal of concern in the Widcombe/Lyncombe areas (and also in Foxhill and Combe Down) about Curo's proposed Aerial Tramway, or Cable Car. Many hundreds of homes could be affected with possibly thousands of people per day flying over or close to them and looking into gardens or through windows; you might like to imagine what that would be like if it affected your own home.

The promoter has clearly done a lot of work on the cable car option which has not been shared. One of the problems people face is that there is so little information about the scheme. Unless more information is given, the forthcoming exhibitions will not constitute a legitimate consultation such as might be carried out as a pre-application exercise. There appears at this stage to be little or no information about the route, the appearance of the buildings and structures involved, usage, viability, the effects on traffic and so on – basic information which any one would clearly need in order to come to a view.

We are aware there is to be a presentation to Councillors this week from Curo or their consultants. The prospect of this scheme has raised the concerns within the community that are reflected in the questions below. We hope that at your meeting with Curo you will be able to raise these questions in order that the public consultation at the end of the week can be well informed.

1. The route – does Curo intend to show a plan of the route at the consultation?
2. The size of the cars – Widcombe Association (WA) was told it would be 80-120 passengers – is this right?
3. The docking stations – where exactly will they be located? On the car park behind the station? How big? (Other comparable ones seem to be the size of a 3-4 storey building with a significant footprint)

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4. The pylons – where? How many? How big?
5. Overlooking – how will privacy be safeguarded along the route?
6. How many Listed Buildings are on or close to the route?
7. Access and parking
 - (a) effect of large numbers of people at the bottom near the station – access to that site, waiting areas etc., and
 - (b) particularly the issues about access and parking at the top. If large numbers of commuters or visitors from south of Bath choose to use the cable car, how will they reach it, if not in walking distance? Will there be a car park? Will open space be lost on the Mulberry Park site? If there is no car park will people seek to park within the development or elsewhere in Combe Down? Will Mulberry Park become, effectively, the fifth park-and-ride? Will commuters use “kiss and ride” and what arrangements will there be for this? What will be the effect on traffic locally?
8. Technical issues – is there an updated report? Is it going to be made public? If not, why not?
9. What are Curo’s assumptions about passenger numbers? Will they be made public? How many commuters and where from? Any going up rather than down? How many tourists? Why would Mulberry Park be attractive to them – poor views etc.? (the WA has been told an Alexandra Park stop has been ruled out). How much will the cost be to use the cable car and how does this compare with alternatives?
10. How many days will it be out of action due to wind etc.? What happens then? How many days will tourists not wish to use the route due to rain and poor visibility?
11. What are Curo’s assumptions about the impact on traffic (good and bad)? Can the figures be made public? To what extent is South Bath a priority, in traffic terms, compared with other parts of Bath? Do they anticipate further cable cars elsewhere in Bath?
12. Are all the other options for improved public transport being analysed with the same degree of rigour?
13. What is their assessment of the visual effect on the WHS, the AONB, the Conservation Area, and the Green Belt? Have they done (or will they do) an Environmental Impact Assessment? Are there any effects on wildlife (bats, birds, etc.)?
14. How much will it cost? Is it likely to be viable? Other cable cars (eg. Emirates in London) have greatly exceeded estimated construction costs, but not achieved significant usage. What would happen if it was built but was not viable? Would public money be required? Or would it simply rot away?
15. It is understood that Curo are proposing to use the Transport and Works Act procedures for both the Order to construct and operate, and for planning permission. It is a very expensive process and still requires local authority support. Would it not be better to apply for planning permission from the local authority first as recommended by DfT in the draft guidance?

16. Safety. Cable cars sometimes break down – eg. Tenerife and Switzerland recently. What are the implications if this happens over someone's home?
17. Air rights. How do Curo intend to deal with people who refuse to grant rights? Will there be compulsory purchase?
18. The transport assessments for Foxhill and Mulberry Park conclude that a good level of service by bus can be achieved. To ensure this, relatively modest section 106 agreements to enhance the bus service are being agreed. Why then does Curo see the need for a very costly and commercially risky cable way system? It is unusual for a Housing Association to spend substantial sums of money on such ventures and it is not too easy to see how it fits with its objectives regarding the provision of social housing. Could this be explained?

Clearly the Council will not be able to lend its support to a scheme at this stage. Equally, it will be difficult for the public to express a view, even on the principle, without significantly more information. If this proposal progresses towards a more meaningful consultation the Council will need to satisfy itself on all these points, and no doubt on other matters.

We are grateful to you for reading this note and we hope it will be helpful at the meeting this week.

Yours sincerely,



Jeremy Boss
Chairman
Widcombe Association.