

New funding for accessibility as government reports progress for disabled people across transport network

- first-of-its-kind competition to find new ways to improve transport accessibility is launched
- funding of up to £500,000 could remove physical barriers, make it easier to access information, or better support travellers
- new funding comes as companies are recognised for their dedication to providing better service

Innovative ideas to improve travel for disabled passengers could be made a reality thanks to government funding announced today (3 November 2020).

The Department for Transport (DfT) is marking [Purple Tuesday](#) by launching the first-of-its-kind Accessible Technology Research and Innovation Grant (ATRIG), which will invest up to £500,000 in projects that can improve access to services or inspire more confidence to travel.

These projects could provide a range of practical solutions that remove physical barriers, make it easier to access information, automate processes or see better support for travellers. They could include:

- ways for visually-impaired passengers to identify the bus they want to catch
- smartphone apps to report inaccessibility and track progress
- a Wayfinder-style system to plan bus journeys

Previously, the department has funded a mobile phone app to help people with dementia use public transport to get to hospital.

The department's [Access for All](#) programme has now provided 200 stations with better access across Great Britain, with around 100 more to be completed by 2024 – a quarter of these in Scotland and Wales. The continued success of the Access for All programme, and accessibility improvements delivered as part of other station enhancement projects, means that more than 75% of rail journeys are now through stations with step-free access, compared with around 50% in 2005.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Everybody's way of travelling has been affected by COVID-19, but none more so than those who are disabled. While essential in tackling the virus I know the widespread use of masks, social distancing and changed timetables has been disconcerting for people with accessibility issues.

I want to harness the power of technology to improve accessibility for disabled people through COVID and beyond. Today's funding will play a key role by finding new and innovative ideas and projects to break down barriers and could make a massive difference to people's lives.

The competition comes as the department publishes its 2-year update on its [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#), highlighting the work delivered – including expanding [Blue Badges](#) to non-visible disabilities, launching the [It's everyone's journey](#) public awareness campaign, and funding [59 Changing Places toilets](#) in motorway services, 7 of which have now opened, with more to do so next year.

As part of this, the department has also launched the [Inclusive Transport Leaders Scheme](#) and is today announcing the first companies to receive accreditation under the scheme. Brighton and Hove Buses and Hovertravel have achieved the highest status as 'Leaders', with Network Rail and Arriva Kent and Surrey receiving 'Committed' status. The 'Leaders' demonstrate best practice and can share their experience with others, while 'Committed' members have demonstrated a good foundation on which to build better services for disabled passengers. More transport operators will be invited to join shortly

Transport companies are also being urged to use free disability training resources, being published shortly, to train their staff so disabled people have a consistent and positive experience regardless of transport mode, helping overcome one of the biggest barriers to confident travel along with infrastructure enhancements. The training has been designed with the involvement of disabled people and will help change the way staff interact with and support all passengers.