

News story: First of a Kind competition: transform tomorrow's train journeys

The First of a Kind (FOAK) competition invites bids from companies to fund existing innovations that may be in use outside the rail industry but which could benefit rail passengers. This could, for example, be to create more space in carriages or provide improved assistance to passengers with a diverse range of needs.

The competition, run by Innovate UK, is part of the [Department for Transport's \(DfT\)](#) wider Accelerating Innovation in Rail (AIR) scheme. This is aimed at introducing cutting-edge ways of improving the whole passenger experience on rail, such as helping rail services to run efficiently and on time.

AIR develops ideas from concept, whereas the FOAK scheme aims to fund ideas already working in the real world that could be successfully transferred to the rail industry. As they already exist, under the scheme passengers will be able to use them in trials and give feedback.

The first challenge in the FOAK competition is rolling stock. Organisations are invited to bid for funding for technology not previously used on trains and examine how they can be integrated. Later funding will focus on other aspects of the railway network.

Passengers at the heart

Rail Minister Paul Maynard said:

As well as encouraging innovative ideas from concept, we want to help develop existing ideas that can be transferred successfully to the rail industry for the benefit of passengers.

The aim of government, train operators and infrastructure managers is to put passengers at the heart of everything we do. If we can help fund development of these inventive and ground-breaking ideas then this will help support the biggest modernisation programme in rail since the Victorian era.

Ian Meikle, Innovate UK's Director – Infrastructure Systems, said:

We want to unlock the talent of UK companies to demonstrate tomorrow's trains today. This first of a kind competition will result in tangible, realistic prototypes that have the potential to

meet the challenges of passenger journeys.

Gordon Wakeford, Chair of the Rail Supply Group, commented:

The rail supply sector is continually seeking to improve the passenger experience by developer new and better products and solutions. This competition will provide a stimulus for the many innovative companies in our sector to develop new and ground-breaking ways to enhance rail journeys.

I am confident that the rail industry will rise to this challenge with commitment and creativity.

Competition information