

News story: Future railways: £3.6 million invested in rail improvements

Busy London train station at rush hour.

£3.6 million funding has been offered to 10 projects that will transform rail passenger travel.

The projects will develop and demonstrate technologies that will improve the passenger experience on UK railways. These include:

- a design for train carriages that will increase peak hours seat numbers
- a carriage design that can quickly switch from carrying passengers to carrying goods
- beacons that guide visually-impaired passengers through the station and to their seat
- technology enabling disabled passengers to seek real-time assistance with their journey
- an augmented reality application that highlights a journey's landmarks

The technologies will be showcased through real-life demonstrators, enabling passengers to experience and feedback on the innovations.

Supporting innovation in rail

Rail Minister Jo Johnson said:

We are investing in the biggest rail modernisation programme since Victorian times, introducing the changes that passengers want to see – more frequent services and quicker, more comfortable journeys.

While we have introduced real-time platform information, taken big strides on safety and improved how we manage our railways to accommodate more services on existing tracks, the pace of change can sometimes be slower than we would like to see.

[The] funding is part of a wider programme of activities to speed up the delivery of new ideas and high-value innovations, which can have a big impact on passengers' journeys.

Improving travel

The funding was offered through a First of a Kind competition run by Innovate UK, part of the Department for Transport's (DfT) scheme to improve the passenger experience on rail.

Ian Meikle, Director of Infrastructure Systems at Innovate UK, said:

The UK railway is carrying more and more passengers, and they rightly demand improvements to their journeys. What we are announcing today are tangible innovations, which each in their own way will make train travel better.