

[News story: New round of multi-million tech competition launches to improve rail journeys](#)

Lightweight energy-saving carriages, software telling passengers how busy arriving trains are, and personalised ticket machines that help customers with their ongoing journeys are just some of the projects that have won funding in the government's railways innovation scheme.

Now another £7.9 million is on offer to develop cutting-edge ways to improve the network for passengers in the next round of the [Accelerating Innovation in Rail \(AIR\) scheme](#), run by the Department for Transport (DfT) in partnership with Innovate UK.

The competition is open to companies of all sizes across the UK, but all entries must be collaborative, involving at least two different organisations and at least one SME. Entries will be accepted from 18 September to 15 November 2017.

Rail Minister Paul Maynard said:

We want to see ideas that improve reliability on the network for passengers. We have a wealth of pioneering, innovative companies out there ready to put their ideas into practice.

This is about nurturing innovation on the railways and about developing trains that are less reliant on complex and expensive infrastructure.

We want to tap into these inventive and ground-breaking ideas for the benefit of rail passengers across the country, and to support the biggest modernisation programme in rail since the Victorian era.

The [last funding round in March this year](#) attracted a diverse range of entries, including designing automated vehicles to carry out track inspections, improving trackside drainage to cut delays and line closures, and software to predict when potential train breakdowns might occur

The funding has been allocated through a rigorous assessment process involving experts from the industry, and has attracted up to £4 million in private sector finance as well. Following successful testing and demonstration, successful projects will have the potential to be rolled out across the network.