News story: Roads designed for future vehicles: apply for funding

Technological advances, including low carbon, connected and autonomous vehicles, will transform how people travel – and significantly change how the UK's transport network operates.

While our roads have been evolving, the biggest opportunities will come from planning ahead longer term to anticipate and respond to the requirements of future vehicles.

Working with Innovate UK, Highways England has up to £20 million for UK organisations with projects to change the way UK roads are designed, managed and used.

The competition is being run via the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI).

Proving and testing an idea

There are 2 parallel competitions for:

- feasibility studies for ideas that are unproven and at a low technology readiness level
- feasibility projects that have already been proven and are at a mid to high technology readiness level

In both competitions, projects should tackle the transport challenges in Highways England's Connecting the country: planning for the longer term (pdf).

They must cover one of 6 core themes:

- design, construction and maintenance, including:
    - greater automation of the design process
    - greater automation of construction work, including the inspection and management of assets
    - adopting more modular construction techniques
    - expanding and improving data collection
    - creating a unified asset management system
    - increasing the use of advanced materials that are self-maintaining and extend the asset lifecycle
- connected and autonomous vehicles, such as maximising their safety and capability and increasing uptake
- customer mobility, such as improving experiences for road users and connections with other modes of transport
- energy and the environment, which covers electric and other clean energy sources as well as the impacts that road networks have on neighbouring environments

- operations, from customer service and traffic management, to roadworks and incident and severe weather response
- air quality, particularly targeting oxides of nitrogen and other air pollutants

A project can focus on different types of road or road use, and be either location-specific or generic, so long as it is applicable to Highways England's [strategic road network](#).

Proving the feasibility of an idea

There is £8 million for the feasibility studies competition. This is across 2 phases and will be split across the 6 themes.

The first phase has up to £2 million for up to 20 projects to evidence and determine the feasibility of an idea.

In phase 2, the most promising projects from the first phase can get funding to develop and evaluate a prototype. A total of £6 million will be available.

Competition information

- the competition opens on 11 February 2019, and the deadline for registrations is at midday on 1 May 2019
- organisations of any size are eligible to lead a project, working alone or collaborating with others
- in phase 1, projects can last up to 2 months with total costs of up to £75,000 including VAT. They can last up to 9 months and have costs of up to £1 million including VAT in phase 2
- there will be a webinar briefing on 14 February for applicants to find out more about the competition

Ready for further development

Up to £12 million is available for projects where the feasibility has already been proven and are at the development phase.

They should be ready for imminent on-road testing and deployment, having met necessary safety assurances.

The expectation is to fund 12 projects across the 6 themes.

Competition information

- the competition opens on 11 February 2019, and the deadline for registrations is at midday on 1 May 2019
- organisations of any size are eligible to lead a project, working alone or collaborating with others
- projects are expected to start by September 2019 and last up to 12 months
- total eligible project costs can be up to £1 million including VAT
- there will be a webinar briefing on 14 February for applicants to find

out more about the competition