

Virtual reality stations and video-call assistance: government invests in new transport accessibility innovation

- tech start-ups awarded new funding to kickstart innovative projects that break down barriers faced by disabled passengers
- projects will improve communication between passengers and staff, as well as mapping out accessible routes

Pioneering technologies including virtual reality simulations of rail vehicles and stations and a journey planning app that includes video calling for assistance are among winners of government funding announced today (16 July 2021) to improve the travel experience for disabled passengers.

The technologies developed by the 5 [Accessibility Transport Research and Innovation Grant \(TRIG: Accessibility\) 2021 winners](#), announced today, will help break down barriers faced by disabled passengers as we build back fairer from coronavirus (COVID-19).

The TRIG: Accessibility programme, in partnership with [Connected Places Catapult \(CPC\)](#), is focused on knocking down the barriers that disabled people face when travelling, to help budding innovators and academics to propel their ideas to market more quickly.

Winning projects include a system that fully navigates the user from their front door to their destination, taking into account any special requirements, and allowing passengers to video call staff directly to provide support.

A highly realistic virtual reality simulation, immersing users in rail stations and carriages, has also received funding, to help improve staff understanding of the challenges faced by passengers and build the confidence of disabled passengers when travelling on the rail network.

Another project is focused on building a more reliable experience for airport passengers needing assistance, providing an app to improve communication with airport staff.

Chris Heaton-Harris Accessibility Minister said:

These 5 innovative projects will help make our transport network more open, stress-free and simple for disabled passengers, and I'm proud that we're investing in unique technology to improve accessibility across the UK.

We're committed to making transport accessible for all and this investment, along with the [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#), will build

a better, fairer network for the future.

Winning firms will receive almost £600,000 to launch these innovative projects and the trial period will be completed by the end of November 2021, with working prototypes being showcased to industry following this.

Nicola Yates OBE, CEO, Connected Places Catapult, said:

It is great to be working alongside the Department for Transport Accessibility Policy Team to deliver an expanded TRIG programme to the world of transport accessibility.

The funding that the 5 winners will receive as part of the TRIG: Accessibility programme, alongside technical and commercial guidance from the Catapult, will enable them to demonstrate their innovative solutions later this year.

It is our aim that these solutions will enable access to England's transport services for passengers who may need support when travelling to connect with the places around them.