

Better Value 'tool kit' welcomed by light rail experts

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A new initiative that could help drive innovative solutions to the UK's future transport needs has been welcomed by light rail experts.

The latest meeting of the UKTram Centre of Excellence, which is dedicated to expanding and enhancing light rail in the UK, recently heard how the Better Value Rail toolkit will help shape future transport projects.

In a presentation, Ian Raxton, Principal Inspector of Railways at the Office of Rail and Road, explained that the joint initiative from the Department for Transport, the ORR, and Network Rail aims to help clarify the objectives of projects and narrow down the different transport modes that can deliver them.

Although it primarily considers rail-based solutions, it embraces alternatives to traditional heavy rail, including tramways, metro systems and very light rail (VLR).

James Hammett, UKTram Managing Director, commented: "We were delighted that Mr Raxton took the time to address the meeting and explain the many benefits of the BVR toolkit."

“We were particularly pleased to see its inclusion of VLR as a cost-effective approach to improving connectivity, reducing congestion and improving the environment in smaller cities and larger towns.

“While several such schemes are currently under consideration or development, including in Coventry, UKTram sees VLR as an increasingly viable alternative to the more complex light rail systems that are proving so popular in larger urban areas.”

Although both light and very light rail can utilise disused heavy rail infrastructure, including old branch lines, VLR is easier to install in built-up areas, reducing costs and disruption during the construction process.

The Better Value Rail toolkit complements work done by UKTram to develop a comprehensive ‘route map’ to help keep proposed light rail schemes on track.

The latest Centre of Excellence meeting also heard that the next phase of the project was also progressing well, with the DfT responding positively to an initial draft ‘pre-route map’ to assist scheme sponsors in the earliest stages of the planning process.

Mr Hammett added: “Together these projects aim to unlock the potential of mass transit systems to drive investment in our towns and cities while boosting connectivity and meeting carbon reduction targets.”

Further details about Better Value Rail can be found [here](#) while the UKTram/Centre of Excellence route map can be viewed [here](#).

Photo credit: ORR