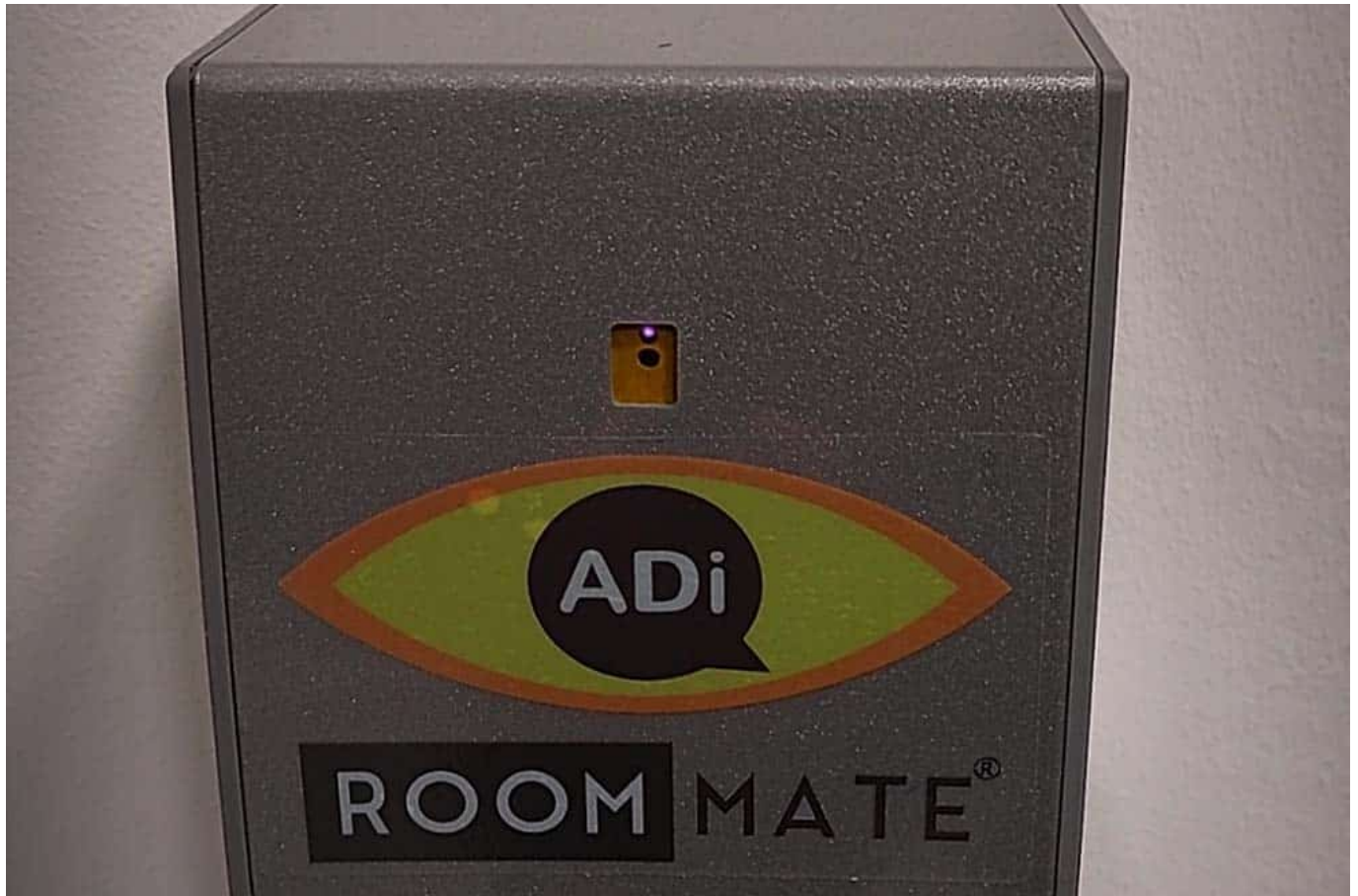


## New audio devices fitted as part of accessibility initiative

January 25, 2022



Northern is improving its toilet facilities thanks to a new device which helps the blind and visually impaired.

The RoomMate is wall-mounted and provides a bespoke audio description to people using the facilities. In all, 44 different locations will use one on the rail operator's network.

Whenever someone needs audio assistance, they can wave their hand over the unit, which activates a detailed description of the room.

The unit might say phrases such as "the toilet is on the wall facing you," "the toilet tissue is on the wall to your left," "there is a single lever tap," "the exit door handle is on the right of the door."

The project has gone ahead as part of Northern's accessibility fund, which helps communities decide on the changes they want for their railways.

In total, there have been 13 projects getting up to £50,000 each in funding. These projects focus on

improvements to stations like handrails, ramps and automatic doors – as well as schemes to encourage those with visibility impairments to use public transport.

Northern says the fund is a first for the UK rail industry.

Successful bids were selected by the Northern Accessibility User Group (NAUG) and supported by Northern.

Mark Powles, commercial and customer director at Northern, said: “Our customers are the heart of everything we do, and we are dedicated to making Northern’s services accessible to everyone and to having a positive impact for the north.

“This scheme will give blind and visually impaired people added confidence when using our services.

“The accessibility fund is part of our wider project to transform our network and encourage people to use public transport – no matter their circumstances.”

Terri Balon, RNIB regional campaign officer for the North West, said: “We welcome the installation of RoomMate in 44 locations across the rail operators’ network which will make it more accessible for blind and partially sighted to navigate toilets easier as the technology provides an audio description of the toilet layout.

“As a member of the Accessibility Fund Panel, I am delighted to see the proposal for the installation of RoomMate ‘Talking Toilets’ across their network as part of the improvement plan they are working on.”