

## Transport for the North launches global innovation competition to inform the future of public transport ticketing and smart travel

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Transport for the North (TfN) has launched a procurement to inform the development of a ‘Smart North Ecosystem’ to connect the region’s different transport networks and ticketing systems in order to incentivise the use of public transport and other forms of greener, shared and active travel. To do this, the Sub-national Transport Body is seeking to partner with tech leaders and other innovators from around the world to understand what new and near-to-market smart technology solutions could deliver this.

Innovators are being encouraged to demonstrate how a Smart North Ecosystem could transform travel in the North of England and deliver numerous benefits for passengers, including enabling capped fares and integrated travel offers between different modes and operators; inclusion of on-demand services and support for the unbanked; as well as financial incentivisation and other rewards for using public transport and shared or active travel instead of private cars.

Importantly, the Smart North Ecosystem is also seen as key to helping the North’s Local Transport Authorities achieve crucial socio-economic objectives – including a reduction in carbon emissions,

promotion of healthy living, and encouraging economic growth – that may not be as easily achieved by traditional public transport ticketing measures alone.

The supporting Innovation Partnership Procurement is being delivered as part of TfN's £150m Department-for-Transport-funded [Integrated and Smart Travel](#) (IST) programme. Innovators are being invited to put forward expressions of interest to take part in the competitive procurement process, with a view to conducting technology demonstrators and pilots before the end of this financial year (March 2021). Grant funding is on offer to suppliers to further develop their initial ideas – with further funding to upscale and bring solutions into operation dependent on the success of demonstrator activity.

Jeremy Acklam, TfN's Integrated and Smart Travel Director said: "We are excited to be launching our search for partners to join Transport for the North and demonstrate how we can incentivise more of the 15m citizens in the North of England to use a digitally connected ecosystem of transport across our region.

"Our vision for a Smart North Ecosystem is bold and transformative. The North's many transport networks need to be better connected and able to work together to deliver the enhanced and seamless travel experience we know passengers want, as well as to achieve other crucial objectives for our region including decarbonisation and economic growth. I am confident smart technology will support this."

To date, through the IST programme, in partnership with Local Transport Authorities and operators, TfN has delivered smartcard and flexi season tickets for rail passengers; open-data driven enhancement to online and app-based travel information; and is currently progressing the delivery of contactless payments across all modes of public transport. Outcomes from the innovation partnership will be used to inform business case submissions to the Department for Transport and de-risk later phases of the programme.

Jeremy continued: "We want to work with the best innovators from around the world so that we can deliver something truly innovative and ideally suited to the North of England. When Transport for the North first prioritised smart travel, there were doubters who questioned whether passengers would want to ever use contactless payments – and just look how quickly the world's moved on.

"Smart technology is revolutionising other industries and should be doing the same for transport; therefore, it is important that we are forward looking and ambitious in our approach to tackling the challenges facing today's transport networks and delivering long-term benefits for people across the North."

More information about the Innovation Partnership initiative, including how to apply to take part in the procurement activity, can be found on Transport for the North's [website](#).

*Photo credit: Transport for the North*

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