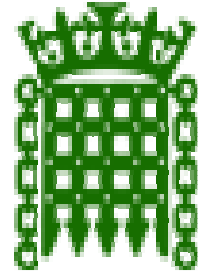


Light Rail (UK)

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

"The past we inherit, the future we build"
Trams – Catalysts for Jobs, Renewal & Regeneration



Innovative light rail



Image: shutterstock.com.

7 July 2015

Over the past few years, there has been a push to fast forward research into technologies and processes that will innovate Britain's railway. Pots of money and dedicated bodies have been created to drive forward improvements on the heavy rail network. Now light rail is looking at how to develop its corner of the industry.

At the UK Light Rail Conference 2015 in Nottingham last month, Paul Griffiths, metro programme director at West Midlands' transport authority Centro, announced that funding was in place to support seven projects to move forward to the next stage of UK Tram's Low Impact Light Rail research programme.

The initiatives, which will address innovation in the 'big areas of the industry', vary from lightweight modular track and track welding solutions to the design of overhead line equipment.

"Of course this is just one project to bring innovation to light rail and we can't stop with this," said Griffiths. 'It's great to see the awareness of innovation growing in the industry, it's great to see an innovation zone out there at the conference for the first time'

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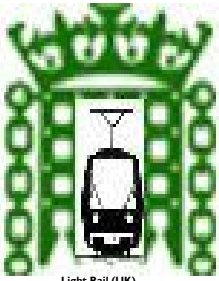
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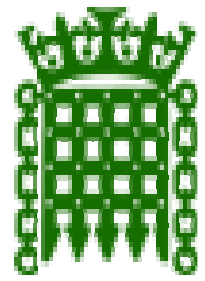


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Low Impact Light Rail is being funded by Innovate UK, with £3 million from its SBRI programme, and the Department for Transport (DfT). More than 40 expressions of interest were initially received, from which 15 entries were awarded funding to look at the feasibility of their designs.

Griffiths said the programme's aim is to reduce the whole-life cost of light rail and make it a more attractive proposition. It won't, however, look at one of the most significant costs associated with a new system – the rolling stock.

"We felt that that was really outside our capability, to fund work on cheaper, lighter vehicles and also that was being done elsewhere," said Griffiths, referring to Future Railway's Radical Train competition.

Having launched the programme in 2013, the companies involved will now work to develop demonstrator systems to trial, potentially at Long Marston where Midland Metro's retired T69 trams are now stored. Geoff Inskip, chairman of UKTram, said: "This is a really exciting time for light rail in the UK. We are seeing the expansion of several of our light rail systems and light rail is now carrying nearly a quarter of a billion passengers in the UK each year.

"These innovation projects will each improve the cost effectiveness of light rail and will assist in bringing it to more of our towns and cities. I look forward to seeing their development taken forward."

This year's two-day UK Light Rail Conference featured an eclectic mix of speakers and included presentations on international light rail projects in Utrecht, the Netherlands, and the Middle East.

List of demonstrator projects

- Precast Advanced Track (Light Rail and Metro) – PCAT: modular pre-cast track slab design.
- Composite Overhead Line Equipment – Atkins: Overhead line equipment utilising composite materials.
- The Integrated Modular Light Rail Rapid Construction System – TRL: lightweight modular track form design.
- More Energy Efficient Trams – Alta Innovations Ltd: a set of tools to maximise the efficiency of how light rail vehicles utilise their power requirements.
- Ultralite Track – EM Track Alliance led by BWB Consulting – modular track slab designed to be compatible with bus rapid transit.

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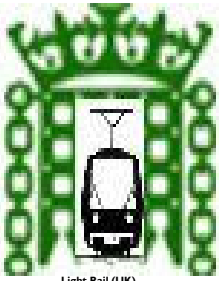
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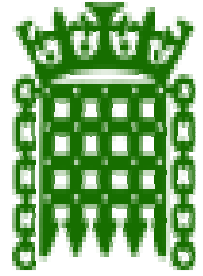


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- Optimum Rail Wear Limits – University of Huddersfield, Institute of Rail Research: development of a rail asset management tool.
- Weld Restore – ARR Rail Solutions: development of a cost effective weld deposition method for in-situ restoration of worn grooved rail including high strength steels.

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