

# INNOTRANS PGI02182

## Action Plan for Coventry



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## **ACTION PLAN - COVENTRY**

### **1. Overview**

For the past three years the INNOTRANS project has been working to identify ways in which Policy Instrument funding can be used to improve innovation in transport. The ultimate goal of the project is to assist regions in creating a funding strategy that builds upon existing and potential areas of competitive advantage, avoiding fragmentation and insularity and linking and leveraging the assets in new and different ways.

In this process we have looked closely at existing strategies and networks operating in the regions. These are referred to in the supporting research framework documents. We have identified a number of gaps in provision and opportunities to improve the rate of innovation in the region.

Since 2016 we have had a referendum on remaining in the European Union followed by three General Elections. This level of political instability is unprecedented in modern Britain and the rapidly and constantly evolving environment, together with reaching the final round of funding from the original ESIF/ERDF policy instrument has made it difficult to influence a specific Policy.

In light of this situation we are making two recommendations:

The first will influence funds currently committed to Innovation and business development in the Coventry and Warwickshire region to direct activity towards transport innovation. The second is a scoping exercise. We already have a strong indication that there is benefit to be had from a functioning cluster in a region that already has a strong transport sector. The output of this action will be a proposal for funding for a cluster once more of the potential players have been consulted.

### **2. Background**

Coventry City Council has a strong history as a leader in transport innovation. Participation in, and facilitation of, recent innovation projects has led to the city becoming known as a testbed for innovation, especially for connected and autonomous vehicles. The council has strong links with academic partners, two world class universities in the city. In particular Coventry University hosts the Institute for Future Transport and Cities for which is the largest transport related research department of any university in the UK.

Coventry has been at the centre of transport innovation throughout its industrial history. The first bicycle factory was built here, which led the region into motorcycle and automotive production. Today the region hosts various research and development centres for the motor industry including Jaguar Land Rover and TATA motors. Regional development plans weave automotive and transport strands through every theme.

Involvement in the INNOTRANS Project has taken us on journey looking at innovation in five different countries. Each has a unique situation, transport and innovation environment but each also faces some of the same transport challenges: congestion, pollution, safety and the need to facilitate the movement of increasing numbers of people for increasing distances whilst producing lower emissions on an aging infrastructure.

From the work carried out on this project we have identified a number of key themes in effective transport innovation. It is clear that as digital technologies advance there is an opportunity to make significant and innovative changes to transport modes and systems. At present there are problems in a number of areas which are limiting the rate of innovation:

- Cooperation – we are in a broad phase of innovation and cooperation is essential to widen the idea pool.
- Data access and usage – There is considerable data available in our transport system, however it is not always easy to access, to define the data needed or to filter.
- Access to finance – much of local transport budgets are directed to maintaining infrastructure.
- Transport funding and plans are directed at keeping the current infrastructure running and there are limited resources for innovation which does demonstrate an immediate benefit to the population.

Increasing the levels of cooperation is essential to widen the ideas pool and to help smaller companies in the region to grow.

One of the projects demonstrated to INNOTRANS as a good practice was MobiThess, which attempted to connect travellers in Thessaloniki with up to the minute information on routes and congestion in the city. Whilst it is no longer running, it showed that it is possible to present travellers with their best choices in a way which they were willing to adopt and use. It was also ground breaking in bringing together different modes of transport and operators in a single app for traveller information. The OKThess project demonstrated that an applied approach to bringing transport innovators can be very successful in developing effective innovation and collaborations. Finally the Successful Spin Offs good practice, also described by AUTH has demonstrated the positive impact that building relationships between Universities and Business can bring.

Inspired by these, in Coventry, we are seeking to bring businesses and innovators together to collaborate on meeting the cities needs from innovation in transport. Left to the market innovation projects will succeed where the proposed are connected and able to make the consortia that they need. As demonstrated by the MCAV project, when you bring the right people together you can develop added value projects, create employment to the region and bring innovation to the market. This might mean development of projects which build on the city's past projects to exploit the work already done on parking, kerb management and on real time congestion mapping to place this information in the hands of travellers and allow them to make effective choices. It could create new and effective solutions to the issues of managing traffic flows and congestion in and around the city. It will ensure that the work and employment created by these projects is centred in the region.

### **3. Action: Integration of transport innovation support in existing ERDF SMEs support programmes**

At present all calls for funding under the final round of funding from ERDF are in the final stages of agreement. It is not possible to gain access to funding for a specific call. There are, however, a number of actions already in place which can be influenced to direct funding towards transport innovation.

#### 4. Action Details

It has been agreed that the following ERDF regional programmes will be proposing support to increase opportunities for SMEs with innovations and opportunities in transport related fields:

- Innovation Networks
- C&W Innovation Test Beds
- C&W Green Business
- C&W Business Support

We will use the findings of INNOTRANS to further shape services being delivered through these projects that would not have included this angle otherwise. INNOTRANS has highlighted the lack of support available for innovation in transport and the size of the current opportunity to create disruptive and innovative opportunities.

They will be offering to the SMEs:

- Innovation networks will run a marketing strand to target transport orientated businesses. It provides 44% matched grants up to £12,000 to commercialise products, processes and services by
  - Supporting IP and trademark applications
  - Helping with strategic marketing, marketing research and focus groups.
  - Providing specialist software and development
  - tooling and components
- The work of the Green Clusters in Green Business will connect SMEs with researchers in the Institute for Future Transport and Cities, the largest academic research centre in transport in the UK. In 2021 they will now launch transport specific clusters.
- Access to revenue grants, particularly through CW Innovation Test Bed to test and launch new products that could bring innovation to transport fields (including securing of any IP rights).
  - This will take the form of grants and support for Intellectual Property protection.
  - Grants are available of up to £50,000 for New Product Development, New manufacturing and IP protection
  - One to one support is available for research.
- The Green Business Programme will seek out Transport Specific Projects
  - The majority of Transport development projects will reduce carbon emissions, which makes them relevant to this programme.
  - Grants of up to £20,000 are available for IP protection, on the basis of 60% Match funding.
  - External consultancy for IP, design or accreditation can be funded, also on the basis of 60% match funding, up to a maximum of £10,000.
- The activities are being added to the existing already signed projects. They have been approved and officially launched on the 27th February 2019.
- The Projects, supported by thematic experts who have worked on INNOTRANS, will add specific marketing and promotion activities to transport orientated businesses, utilising the networks accessed during the INNOTRANS Project and other local transport groups.

The projects have already started. CUE will be supporting the projects by providing expert input and advice in steering content and activities towards transport innovators. All the projects

overall aim is to support SMEs to increase their competitiveness, in different ways, and the angle of transport innovation is what will be added as a horizontal measure thanks to INNOTRANS.

These projects are managed by Coventry City Council, managing authority in our case for the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP).

The success of these additional transport themed workshops or 1:1 support within these programmes would be measured by the number of SMEs attending the workshops or receiving support, the number of SMEs subsequently securing grants of at least £1,000 (they would be referred to the relevant grants fund after completing the relevant workshop and 1:1 support), and any change in the business' performance (e.g. accessing new markets, introduction of new business processes) through the relevant programme tracking and monitoring systems. The INNOTRANS team will work with the respective project and programme managers to access the relevant performance and monitoring data.

## **5. Persons involved**

CUE Ltd run the projects in question.

Coventry City Council and CW LEP have overall responsibility for the programme and will be involved in agreeing the process and actions

Coventry University hosts the Institute for Future Transport and Cities which will provide Researchers to assist with the Green Clusters programme.

## **6. Timeframe**

The projects will run until the end of the current ERDF funding stream.