



**Ideas in Transit**

## Report on the Support Required by Innovators 5 August 2009

[www.ideasintransit.org](http://www.ideasintransit.org)

### The 'Ideas in Transit' project

**Ideas in Transit** is a five-year project that applies User Innovation to the transport challenges faced by individuals and society. It is a unique collaboration between government, commercial and academic thought leaders and their networks. It will influence intelligent transport decisions at policy, social, personal and commercial levels.

**Ideas in Transit** includes within the concept of 'user innovation' any development which is not top-down (i.e. not driven by a major commercial or public organisation). One of the project's objectives is therefore to discover, understand and promote current innovations that are 'bottom-up', unconventional and/or involve collaboration amongst users.

### Basis for this document

In the first year of **Ideas in Transit**, the project team has already uncovered many user innovations in the transport domain. These are logged in the **Innovations Portal** as a showcase of original and exciting current developments. To better understand the people and processes behind these innovations, the research team at Loughborough University selected some diverse services and products from the Portal and carried out two activities with the innovators themselves:

#### **Interviews with Innovators**

The questions posed were:

- Q What was the process by which the user-innovation came about?
- Q Who were the people involved and what were their roles and motivations?
- Q What were the barriers and enablers to the innovation?
- Q What was the role of technology?
- Q What were the influential trends?

The interviews generated a significant amount of knowledge, particularly with respect to: the enablers and barriers for user innovation and the measures of success. In addition, the activity enabled a better understand of user-innovators, what their needs are and how the project could continue to engage with them as part of the research.

#### **Innovators Workshop**

The specific aims of the workshop were:

- To present the findings of the interviews back to the user innovators for validation, comment and addition.
- To identify the future needs of user innovators and, particularly, how the **Ideas in Transit** project remit could fulfil some of these needs.
- To begin to build a 'community' of user innovators in the transport domain to enable exchange of ideas and a common forum for debate.

After a presentation of the barriers & enablers to innovation identified during the interviews, the innovators were asked to comment on the accuracy of the findings and contribute any other barriers/enablers. Next, the innovators were asked to identify what they had perceived as *personal* successes. Then followed a discussion of what would constitute success for the innovation in *tackling transport challenges*. The final part of the workshop focused on what future activities the innovators would find useful and how the project might continue to engage with them.

In total, 17 innovators took part in the interviews and/or workshop.

## Participants



Stamp Stanley



## OpenCycleMap



## London Bus (iPhone)

## mysociety.org



## Future Needs

The **Ideas in Transit** Innovations Portal was the first step in *discovering* user innovators; and the interviews were the first step in *understanding* them. To enable **Ideas in Transit** to *build a community* of user innovators, the project sought ideas from the participants regarding what further engagement/activity/support would appeal to them. The list below summarises some of the key ideas that were raised during the interviews and workshop:

### Access to knowledge/skills

- Mentoring on relevant topics.
- Free research on aspects of the innovations through undergraduate/postgraduate dissertations.
- Awareness of, and access to, other relevant academics/skills.
- Transport-related masters courses.

### Funding issues

- Opening up possibilities for funding, beyond those which exclude some user innovators/micro SMEs because of their business status and other funding rules (e.g. Technology Strategy Board state aid funding rules).
- An R&D 'free pass' to access public transport to enable testing/proof of concept activities.
- Support in applying to large funding programmes (large corporates have the resources and skills to devote to such calls, many user innovators do not).

### Data issues

- Having the ability to bring together data sets by working with owners/providers.
- Enable this sharing/combining/storing of transport data and the formation of personal profiles without being hampered by the Data Protection Act.
- Tackle issues re who 'owns' certain data (e.g. lift sharing data).
- Explore the concept of data intermediaries, possibly including authorities.

### Policy issues

- The development of a collective voice for user innovators. Particularly re a dialogue with policy makers (note the Carplus model for car clubs was mentioned as an exemplar but others are needed).
- A discussion re the mindset of the ITS industry and government which can be incompatible with innovations of this kind.
- Someone to listen and understand, at grass roots, how these businesses start and grow.

- Routes to getting involved in major UK/European initiatives (e.g. the INSPIRE initiative)

### Publicity/promotion

- Someone to independently prove/demonstrate/measure the impact/value of the innovation to stakeholders.
- Promotion of the innovation through existing academic and related networks.
- Further development of the Innovations Portal as a showcase.

## Suggested activities

The activities suggested below emerged from the user innovator interviews and workshop. The Ideas in Transit project would like to put them forward to the sponsors for consideration. Elements of some of the activities could be resourced from the project itself but most would require additional funding and additional collaborators/sponsors (an example could be NESTA).

### Innovator clinics

Innovator 'clinics' offering support on topics such as business plans, funding sources, technological support.

#### How?

Face-to-face clinics funded through public-supported innovation initiatives.

OR An online resource pointing to existing support services.

OR An online panel of experts acting as a virtual clinic.

### Review of public funding

A review of public funding mechanisms to assess whether the funding mechanisms exclude user innovators due to required business status, timescales, resource-heavy bidding processes or funding conditions.

#### How?

By publicly-funded sponsors in the innovation/transport/sustainability domain.

### Access to 'free' research

Facilitate access to 'free' research via academic contacts with relevant expertise.

#### How?

First, identify if such a 'skills search' already exists. If not, explore ways to provide this.

### R&D pass

Investigate the possibility of a 'free pass' for access to public transport for the purposes of R&D aimed at sustainable transport solutions.

#### How?

Through a public funding mechanism or agreements with public transport providers.

### **Data workshops**

A workshop/sandpit to raise the issues relating to data ownership, sharing, and protection when pursuing sustainable transport innovations and to identify activities to remove any barriers where possible.

#### **How?**

A publicly-funded workshop/series of workshops.

### **User innovators 'association'**

The formation of a User Innovator 'Trade Association' to facilitate a conduit to policy makers and the ITS industry with a collective voice.

#### **How?**

Investigate similar initiatives, discuss with the innovators and consult policy makers in order to identify a way forward

### **Free publicity**

Free promotion/publicity for user innovations which are not for profit and/or for public benefit.

#### **How?**

Possibly via the Ideas in Transit project, including future development of the Innovations Portal. Plus publicly-funded publicity/showcasing.

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## **Project Partners**



**Ergonomics &  
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Institute**



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Society**



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## **Project sponsors**

The Ideas in Transit project is co-sponsored by:



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