University Partners for ‘Centres of Excellence’ for the Rail Industry

Request for Proposals
Closing date: 19th September 2014

Summary
FutureRailway wish to select the universities it will support in current and future bids for funding to create rail R&D capability. This is intended to be the vital step towards creating national ‘centres of excellence’ for the rail industry.

FutureRailway University Partnerships
FutureRailway is the cross industry programme to implement the Rail Technical Strategy (RTS) and is a collaboration led by Network Rail and RSSB working with industry and the supply chain to accelerate research, development and innovation.

FutureRailway is conscious that effective partnerships with universities will be essential to deliver the long term vision set out in the Rail Technical Strategy and to support economic growth through stimulating supplier innovation. There are already valuable relationships with the members of Rail Research UK Association (RRUKA) and with the Strategic University Partnerships of Network Rail and RSSB. However FutureRailway believes it is necessary to be much more ambitious.

An opportunity for RRUKA members
There are a number of funding opportunities available to universities to support the development of business partnership research centres (through government schemes such as HEFCE, RGF, BIS, research council funding and other schemes). These funding mechanisms aim to encourage strategic partnerships between higher education institutions and industry organisations active in research, as well as enhancing UK research capabilities and facilities.

As a step towards realising this vision, FutureRailway wish to select the universities who will receive endorsement for funding submissions to establish new rail R&D capability that can form the ‘foundation’ of the envisaged ‘centres of excellence’.

Accordingly this Request for Proposal (RfP) is being launched for universities to propose how they would partner with FutureRailway and industry in order to deliver the Vision (see below).

- Universities may apply individually or in consortia.
- We are looking for partners who are prepared to apply for and develop new rail R&D capability aligned with the ‘centres of excellence vision’
- FutureRailway, through RRUKA, is giving universities the opportunity to submit proposals to be selected as academic partners covering one or more RTS portfolios (see Annex A) and to provide
whole system thinking. We do not envisage supporting significant duplication of capabilities as this would be at odds with the concept of ‘centres of excellence’. *FutureRailway will work with the academic community to support a number of proposals (applications for funding) that fit with these priorities.*

**An invitation to increase your chances**

It is considered that having FutureRailway (on behalf of the whole rail industry) backing for your proposal will significantly enhance its chance of success (though of course this is not guaranteed). FutureRailway invites RRUKA members who are considering making bids for government funding to contact us in confidence (if required), sharing your plans.

We can do the following with the information you supply, depending on your needs and wishes:

- We can offer advice about how to shape it to better meet rail industry interests, to help you get industrial support.

- If you agree, we can put you in touch with other universities planning similar or complementary proposals, so that you can consider a joint proposal that could be stronger than one by your university alone.

- We will select a number of proposals to endorse as FutureRailway partners with a strong recommendation. For example we will be able to say that we have selected University/Consortia X as a FutureRailway partner to deliver the RTS and we intend to use the centre to deliver a significant element of relevant activity from our >£125m five year programme.

**So what is the industry vision?**

FutureRailway wish to establish ‘centres of excellence’ to support the implementation of the Rail Technical Strategy. It is envisaged these centres will:

- provide unique facilities for accelerated industrially driven research, development, demonstration and validation (we will particularly welcome proposals which can effectively support the higher TRL levels);

- bring together industrial and academic partners to collaborate within a physical space with unique facilities which supports effective delivery of collaborative programmes such as those funded by FutureRailway or Shift2Rail;

- be aligned fully to the delivery of the Rail Technical Strategy, enhancing UK Rail’s technology capability and skills base, creating economic growth and boosting export potential;

- include or be linked to capabilities of national importance for example, integration laboratories, simulated, scale and full scale testing facilities, prototyping and short run production and validation facilities etc.

- provide the pipeline of research that will leverage and support major programmes including those funded by the UK rail industry, FutureRailway and Shift2Rail.
FutureRailway recognises that the full vision may take some time to achieve however there are already some important building blocks in place:

- The Rail Technical Strategy 2012 (RTS) which sets out a long term vision for the railway endorsed by all the key rail industry bodies
- The >£125m public funding available to FutureRailway between 2014-19 to progress the RTS some of which has the potential to leverage privately funded activity delivered through the 'centres of excellence'
- The recent creation of the Rail Supply Group to give a unified voice to the supply chain
- The existing research capabilities and activity within UK universities.

**Timescales**

The deadlines for proposals are as follows:

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<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Closing date for RRUKA members to submit proposals for support</td>
<td>19th September 2014</td>
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<td>Panel review process begins</td>
<td>Week commencing 29th September 2014</td>
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<td>Notification to members and ready to issue 'letters' of support</td>
<td>6th October 2014</td>
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**How to apply**

We advise you to contact us as soon as possible to make us aware of your proposal.

*We will not share your proposal with any other university without your permission.*

Express your interest by contacting secretariat@rruka.org.uk to request the RfP form with the subject heading *FutureRailway- University Partners* and the following information:

- Your name and job title
- Your phone number
- Area(s) of interest by RTS portfolio theme

Non-members who wish to respond to this RfP will be required to apply for RRUKA membership. Find out how your institution can join RRUKA here:

http://rruka.org.uk/membership/
Annex A: The Rail Technical Strategy Portfolios

The RTS is divided into themes and common foundations as summarised below:

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<td>Control Command and Communication</td>
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<td>Infrastructure</td>
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<th>Common Foundations</th>
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To support the implementation of the RTS each of the themes and common foundations is being considered as a ‘Portfolio’. For each portfolio an industry champion has been appointed and a process of ‘portfolio mapping’ is in hand to identify short, medium and longer term activity needed to support delivery of the RTS.

RRUKA have already identified academic contributors to each portfolio. This RfP builds on this approach and seeks to identify Strategic University Partners for each portfolio. It will be important however that the portfolios are considered as part of the whole railway system and it is expected that many programmes and projects will be cross-system and will therefore span portfolios.

The full RTS may be downloaded from here:

http://www.futurerailway.org/strategy/about/Pages/About.aspx