

News story: Lorry technology trials could slash fuel costs and congestion

Lorries on motorways are a step closer to accelerating, braking and steering in sync through wireless technology, thanks to [£8.1 million government funding for trials announced today](#) (25 August 2017).

The 'platooning' trials will see up to 3 heavy goods vehicles, travelling in convoy, with acceleration and braking controlled by the lead vehicle. All lorries in the platoon will always have a driver ready to take control at any time.

If successful, this technology could have major benefits for motorists and businesses in the UK. A row of lorries driving closer together could see the front truck pushing the air out of the way, making the vehicles in the convoy more efficient, lowering emissions and improving air quality.

Transport Minister Paul Maynard said:

We are investing in technology that will improve people's lives.

Advances such as lorry platooning could benefit businesses through cheaper fuel bills and other road users thanks to lower emissions and less congestion.

But first we must make sure the technology is safe and works well on our roads, and that's why we are investing in these trials.

The Transport Research Laboratory will carry out the trial, with funding provided by the Department for Transport and Highways England. It follows a government-funded feasibility study which recommended a trial to examine the benefits and viability of platooning.

Jim O'Sullivan, Highways England Chief Executive, said:

We are pleased to be supporting the government's ambition for the UK to be a global leader for innovation.

The trial has the potential to demonstrate how greater automation of vehicles – in this instance, HGVs – can deliver improvements in safety, better journeys for road users and reduction in vehicle emissions.

Investing in this research shows we care about those using our roads, the economy and the environment, and safety will be integral as we take forward this work with TRL.

The trial will be carried out in 3 phases, with the first focusing on the potential for platooning on the UK's major roads. Initial test track based research will help decide details such as distance between vehicles and on which roads the tests could take place.

Trials are expected on major roads by the end of 2018. Each phase of the testing will only begin when there is robust evidence that it can be done safely.

Similar trials have already been successfully carried out in Europe and the United States.

Rob Wallis, Chief Executive, TRL said:

The UK has an unprecedented opportunity to lead the world in trialling connected vehicle platoons in a real-world environment.

TRL and its consortium of leading international partners, have the practical and technical knowledge gained from previous projects to understand what is required to put a connected vehicle platoon on to UK roads safely.

The team are now taking that expertise and uniquely applying it within live traffic operations.