

Transport Systems Catapult Media Release PR04-14

Strict Embargo: Not for use before 1100hrs Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014

### **Transport Minister launches “All Aboard” accessible buses competition**

Milton Keynes, 24 October – Minister of State for Transport Baroness Susan Kramer today launched a nationwide schools competition aimed at using new ideas and technology to make buses more accessible for people who are visually or hearing impaired.

Baroness Kramer officially launched the competition at the Milton Keynes Academy in Buckinghamshire, after attending a workshop involving pupils from the school and representatives from Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Run by the Transport Systems Catapult on behalf of the Department for Transport (DfT), the “All Aboard” accessible buses competition is open to UK students aged between 14 and 18. It challenges young people to come up with innovative solutions for providing audio and visual information to passengers on board buses. As well as being efficient, the ideas must be sufficiently cost-effective to be rolled out across the country.

There are almost two million people living with a visual impairment in the UK, including 360,000 who are registered as being blind or partially sighted. More than ten million people have some form of hearing loss, with over 800,000 of those being severely or profoundly deaf.

While buses in some areas, most notably London, provide audio-visual information to assist passengers with details on the next stop or final destination of a service, the perceived high cost of existing technology has been cited as an obstacle by bus operators in other parts of the country.

Speaking at the launch, the Minister said she had come up with the idea for the competition while looking to see how accessibility to transport could be improved on a nationwide basis.

“Audio and visual announcements on buses are especially helpful for those who are visually or hearing impaired,” Baroness Kramer said.

“We want to tap into the creativity we know is alive and kicking in our classrooms to find ways in which we can make local transport more accessible. Disabled people have the same rights as anyone else to access public transport, but there remain obstacles. I am open to any ideas that could make buses more user-friendly, for the many passengers who rely on them.”

Competition entries need to be submitted by 13 February, 2015, after which a number of shortlisted entrants will be invited to present their ideas to a judging panel. The winner is due to be announced in March 2015 at the “Big Bang” fair for young scientists and engineers.

As well as receiving a cash prize worth £1000, the competition winner will have the chance to see his or her idea turned into a product, as well as going on a tour of the Houses of Parliament with Baroness Kramer.

A dedicated website has been set up at [www.theallboardcompetition.co.uk](http://www.theallboardcompetition.co.uk) with further information on the format and rules of the competition.

Photos of today's launch event will be available for download from the competition website from 1500hrs.

For more information please contact:

**The Transport Systems Catapult press office on 01908 359 940**

David Reid, Head of Communications, mobile: +44 (0)7508 023744 or e-mail [david.reid@ts.catapult.co.uk](mailto:david.reid@ts.catapult.co.uk)