



Department  
for Transport

# TEST

Transport Evaluation Support for Trials

## Guidance Document

*Version 3.0*  
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# Purpose of the document

The aim of this guidance document is to help public bodies understand and take part in the Transport Evaluation Support for Trials (TEST) Programme.

It explains how the programme can support you to generate high-quality evidence from transport trials and interventions, helping you understand what works and make better decisions about future transport improvements.

We've designed the process to be simple and supportive. We recommend reading this document before submitting an idea.

The TEST Expert Team is available throughout the programme to answer questions and provide support. Contact us at [DfTTESTprogramme@paconsulting.com](mailto:DfTTESTprogramme@paconsulting.com) with any questions or if you want to discuss a potential idea.

Visit our website for updates and to register for upcoming events.



Visit our website to learn more, submit an idea or register interest: [dft-test-programme.co.uk](https://dft-test-programme.co.uk)

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# What is the DfT TEST Programme?

The DfT Transport Evaluation Support for Trials (TEST) Programme is a new three-year initiative providing evaluation support to public bodies that plan to trial innovative approaches to transport delivery. For the TEST Programme, a “trial” refers to any transport intervention where there could be an opportunity to generate useful evidence and learning to inform future policy or delivery decision making.

Open to all public bodies and transport interventions of all types, the programme is designed to:



**Improve the quality and strength of evidence generated:** The programme will help successful applicants to design and evaluate transport trials so that they lead to high-quality, reliable evidence.



**Maximise learning by sharing evidence:** The programme will support public bodies to share insights and best practice for trials, allowing all public bodies to benefit from collective learning.

## Who are the TEST Expert Team?

Working on behalf of DfT, the TEST Expert Team is a consortium of transport and evaluation experts from across PA Consulting, Jacobs, Verian and University of the West of England.

## What support will we provide?



### Our TEST Expert Team

Supporting you to design and deliver a high-quality transport trial, with access to leading experts and resources.

Confident, defensible, decision-ready evidence for your stakeholders.

Practical hands-on technical, analytical, and delivery support.

Simple tools, templates and guidelines for trial design, delivery and evaluation.

# Why should you get involved?

The outcomes from a TEST-supported evaluation could help you:



- ✓ Make more evidence-based decisions about whether to continue, adapt, scale or stop an intervention.
- ✓ Strengthen future business cases and support funding decisions.
- ✓ Support stakeholder engagement by evidencing what interventions deliver.

Participating in TEST means you'll benefit from:

## Dedicated expert support for your transport trials and interventions



Submit an idea to the TEST Programme to receive specialist evaluation expertise tailored to your needs. Supported projects will receive roughly 10-50 days of support from the programme. This could include in-person visits, review of data systems, quality assurance of plans and outputs, support with analysis and reporting of findings.



## Gain valuable insights from other transport interventions

Learn from other projects supported through the programme, including what worked, what did not, and what you can apply in your own context. Key findings will be translated into practical playbooks, templates and case studies to support future decision-making.



## Be part of the national learning network

Connect with public bodies tackling similar challenges to share experiences, insights and good practice. Through a Community of Practice and shared learning activities, you will have access to practical tools, resources and peer support to help build skills and confidence.



We'd like to assess whether a demand-responsive transport service attracts passengers, improves access to key services and reduces car use for some journeys.

The DfT TEST Programme could help us measure demand patterns, user characteristics, trip purposes, access improvements, operating costs and user-reported changes in travel behaviour. Robust impact evaluation findings could help us understand whether the service is delivering value for money, how it could be refined, and whether there is a case for future investment.

## Public body

*Illustrative example of where the TEST Programme could improve public body outcomes*

# How will the programme work?

The programme will deliver three rounds of expert support from summer 2026 to March 2029. Trials and interventions supported through TEST should normally be completed and evaluated within 12 months.

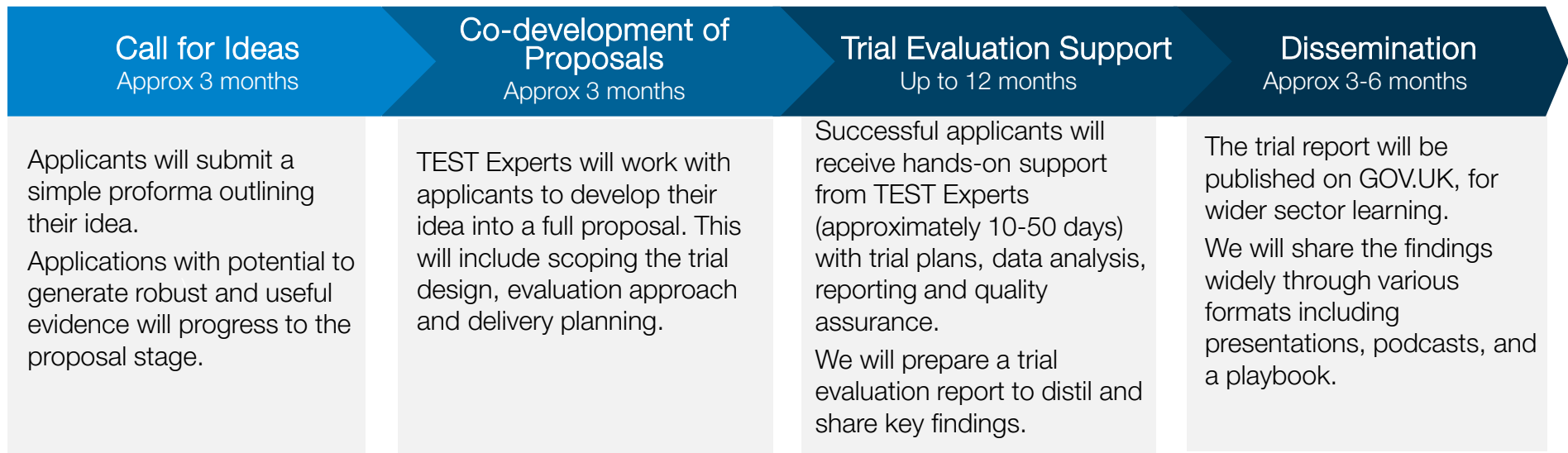
Public bodies can apply to the TEST Programme through three application rounds:

- Round 1: June 2026
- Round 2: November 2026
- Round 3: May 2027

Each round follows four stages:

- **Call for Ideas:** Public bodies submit their trial ideas.
- **Co-development of Proposals:** We will support public bodies to identify the support they need and co-develop full proposals.
- **Trial Evaluation Support:** We will provide public bodies with tailored support for delivery of their trial.
- **Dissemination:** We will share trial findings publicly to support wider learning.

The first round is launching on 17 June, with initial ideas to be submitted by 31 July 2026.



## What transport ideas are eligible?

The TEST Programme will support a broad range of transport trials and interventions at various stages.

All ideas will be assessed and prioritised for progression to the next stage based on two key criteria:

- **Evaluation feasibility** – Can the trial feasibly produce robust evidence about its effectiveness?
- **Learning potential** – How useful will the outcomes and evidence be for others in the transport sector?

We are looking for trials and interventions that can typically be completed within a 12-month period.

➤ Note that this programme provides expert evaluation support, not grant funding. Public bodies should have funding in place, or plans to secure funding, to deliver the trial.

➤ TEST is unlikely to support ideas where there is no clear intervention, where robust evidence cannot realistically be generated, or where support would duplicate existing evaluation funding.

### Your idea could involve



- A new or emerging transport approach.
- An existing intervention being tested in a new place or context.
- A new local transport scheme with wider learning value.
- An existing trial that is still early enough for the evaluation to be strengthened.

#### *Illustrative example of what ideas are eligible for TEST*



Is TEST limited to new transport technologies or high-profile innovation pilots? Our public body is planning to introduce a cycle hire scheme to improve first and last-mile connections between rail stations, bus interchanges and key destinations. We would like to understand whether it reduces reliance on private car journeys.

**Public body**

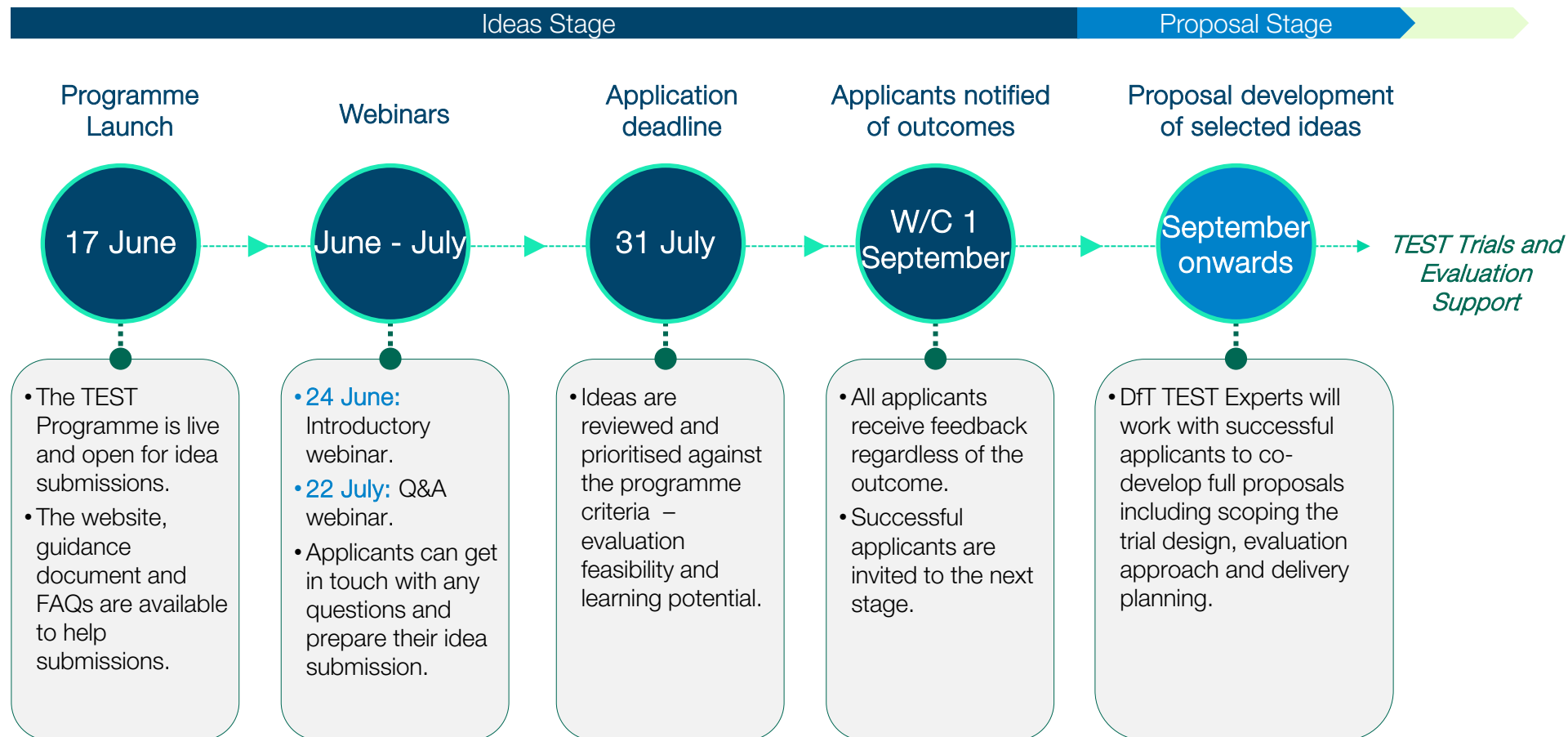
This is a proposal that the TEST Programme could support. We welcome practical transport interventions where there is a clear opportunity to understand what works, for whom, where and why.

**TEST Expert Team**



# Timescales for Round 1

The following timeline highlights key dates for the Idea Stage for Round 1 of the DfT TEST Programme:



Note: This is the standard timetable, but some ideas may be progressed more rapidly where this is necessary.

Refer to the programme website for latest updates on timescales.

# What makes a good idea?

Any public body planning to undertake a transport trial or intervention is eligible to submit an idea for support through TEST. We do not prescribe specific types of trials and actively encourage a diverse range and scale of ideas. Submissions are not required to represent the most innovative or technologically advanced solutions; the emphasis is on evaluation feasibility and learning potential. The examples mentioned below are not exhaustive and other transport interventions are encouraged too.



A good idea is likely to have:

- ✓ A clear local transport problem or opportunity, and evidence gap.
- ✓ A defined intervention, trial or operational change.
- ✓ Consideration of success measures or learning questions.
- ✓ Plans for implementing the trial or intervention (e.g. *management arrangements, delivery partners, resource, funding etc.*)
- ✓ Consideration of data needs, monitoring approaches or relevant delivery partners.
- ✓ Support (or plans to secure support) from internal sponsors or decision-makers.



## Bus and public transport

Bus priority, real-time passenger information, rural bus services, bus stop changes, bus and rail integration, fare promotions.



## Active travel and micromobility

Cycle lanes, quietways, cycle hire integration, secure cycle parking, school streets.



## Parking, kerbside and access

Parking & road charge changes, residents' parking zones, loading arrangements, disabled parking, dynamic kerbside management.



## Traffic, streets and road safety

Traffic signal changes, junction layouts, pedestrian crossings, collision hotspot measures.



## Town centres and public realm

Wayfinding, public realm improvements, pavement widening, transport hub improvements.



## Behaviour change and demand management

Workplace travel planning, reducing short car journeys, school-run travel behaviour.

## Example ideas: How the TEST Programme could help

The following examples illustrate the types of ideas that may be supported through the TEST Programme. They demonstrate the breadth of ideas that can be submitted, the support TEST Experts will provide and the range of outcomes that can be achieved. Further examples can be found in Appendix B.



Example 1:

### Improving first-/last-mile connections with cycle hire

#### What is the idea and why is it relevant for TEST?

A public body and cycle hire provider want to test whether cycle hire at stations and interchanges helps people complete short onward journeys without using a car.

The trial could assess changes in cycle hire use, public transport access, short car trips and user experience.

#### How will TEST Experts support?

TEST Experts could help ensure the trial collects evidence about what drives uptake of it and what difference it makes to users' journeys.

#### What are the potential outcomes from the programme?

The findings could help decide whether to expand cycle hire to more stations, improve integration with public transport, adjust pricing or promotion, and strengthen the case for future investment.



Example 2:

### Prioritising buses on a busy corridor

#### What is the idea and why is it relevant for TEST?

A public body wants to test whether targeted bus priority measures improve reliability on a congested corridor.

The trial could assess changes in bus journey times, punctuality, reliability, passenger experience and impacts on other road users.

#### How will TEST Experts support?

TEST Experts could help ensure the trial collects evidence about the effects of the priority measure on buses and other traffic in that corridor.

#### What are the potential outcomes from the programme?

The findings could support decisions on whether to retain, refine or expand bus priority measures, strengthen future funding bids, and understand trade-offs for other road users.

## What we would need from you

We are here to help you generate high-quality findings from your transport interventions and trials, and to share learning that can benefit the wider transport sector.

To do this effectively, we will need some commitment from you if your idea is taken forward in the programme.

The programme provides expert evaluation support, but it is not a grant funding programme. This means you will need to have, or be developing, plans to fund and deliver the trial and secure any necessary approvals.

You do not need to have everything confirmed before submitting an idea, and plans can still be at an early stage, but deliverability will be a key consideration in decisions about which trials to support.



If your idea is taken forward, we will ask you to agree to the following:

- **You'll provide us with a designated point of contact** for the DfT TEST Programme to engage with, who has responsibility for planning and delivering the trial.
- **You'll agree to share necessary data with us** to support proposal development and trial evaluation. We'll enter an agreement so you can have confidence we'll protect your data.
- **You'll participate in the production of a public-facing trial report** by providing the information we need and agreeing to the report being published, so the evaluation findings and wider learning can be shared with other public bodies.

### *Illustrative example of public body engagement*



I have identified an intervention that could improve transport outcomes, but I have limited experience in designing, delivering, or evaluating trials. I am in the process of securing funding and approvals, but I need practical support and expertise to turn early concepts into well-designed, deliverable trials.

**Public body**

Given that you have plans to progress with the intervention, the TEST Programme can provide expert support to design, deliver, and evaluate it effectively. The programme is designed to help you turn ideas into trials that produce high-quality evidence.

**TEST Expert Team**



# How to apply

## 1 Check eligibility and prepare idea:

The programme is for public bodies planning or delivering transport trials or interventions who want stronger evaluation and clearer, reusable learning. You don't need every detail perfected to submit an idea.

## 2 Complete the online proforma:

Use the [proforma link](#) to describe your idea. The questions are simple but designed to capture the essentials and enable fair comparison across submissions.

DfT TEST Programme idea submission and interest registration form

\* Required

Submit Idea

2. Public body applying and responsible for the trial \*

Enter your answer

3. Applicant name \*

Enter your answer

4. Email contact \*

Enter your answer

Please refer to Appendix A to see a sample of a completed proforma describing an example idea.

Please refer to Appendix C to understand how we will assess your ideas in more detail.

### What idea are you proposing to trial?

*Describe the idea - what you want to test, where, and who it affects.*

### What transport challenge are you hoping to address through this?

*Describe the specific problem and why it matters. How is it relevant to the wider transport sector?*

### What do you think the benefits would be?

*Describe the potential benefits of the change you are seeking to make. This could include user experience improvements, behaviour change, or operational efficiencies.*

### What are your current plans for delivering the trial?

*Describe, where possible, how you plan to implement the trial. Provide any information you have on timings, funding, delivery arrangements or data collection.*

### Are there any key risks, dependencies or constraints you are aware of?

*Describe known risks and dependencies such as funding, procurement, approvals or data availability.*

### What happens next?

After submission, you will receive confirmation that the idea has been submitted. The TEST Expert Team may contact you if we have questions on your idea or need further information.

You will be notified of the outcome w/c 1st September 2026. Whether or not they are progressed to the proposal development stage, all ideas submitted will receive direct feedback from the TEST Expert Team to inform your next steps.

# Appendix

- Appendix A: Example idea submission
- Appendix B: Further example ideas
- Appendix C: How will we assess ideas



## Appendix A: Example idea submission

The following is an example idea submission. It is intended to give you a useful reference point when preparing your own submission.



Department  
for Transport

**Request Submission Reference:** [1df83174-e07c-4280-b8]

**Submission Date:** [7/23/2026 2:54:22 PM]

**Email:** [Jo.Bloggs@metrocitycouncil.com]

**Applicant Name:** [Jo Bloggs]

**Public Body Applying and Responsible for the Trial:** [Metro City Council]

**Idea Status:** [Idea]

### What idea are you proposing to trial?

Trial the deployment of integrated cycle hire hubs at major public transport interchanges (rail, tram and bus), combined with real-time journey planning and incentives to encourage multimodal trips. The trial would test whether seamless access to shared bikes/scooters at arrival points helps users complete first/last-mile journeys efficiently without relying on private cars or taxis.

### What transport challenge are you hoping to address through this?

- Poor first/last-mile connectivity discouraging public transport use.
- High reliance on private cars for short onward journeys.
- Fragmented journey experience across modes (ticketing, availability, wayfinding).
- Congestion and emissions caused by short urban car trips.

### What do you think the benefits would be?

These measures could lead to increased public transport uptake by making journeys more seamless, while reducing short car trips and the associated emissions. They would also improve the reliability of multimodal journeys, enhance the overall user experience through better-integrated travel options, and deliver wider health benefits by encouraging more active travel.

### What are your current plans for delivering the trial?

The trial will pilot the intervention at two high-demand interchanges over a 12-month period, with a proposed start date in January 2027, subject to final approvals. Initial funding has been identified through the local transport budget, and the council is progressing discussions with shared mobility operators and digital journey planning providers to act as delivery partners. The trial will include the installation of cycle hire docks supported by clear wayfinding, alongside integration of real-time hire availability into journey planning apps. Incentives such as discounted first/last-mile rides linked to public transport tickets will be tested to encourage uptake.

## Appendix A: Example idea submission

The scheme has received initial internal endorsement, with formal approvals (including any planning or site-specific permissions) to be secured as part of the next stage. Data will be collected on usage, mode shift, trip patterns and user satisfaction to support evaluation.

### **Are there any key risks, dependencies or constraints you are aware of?**

The availability of sufficient funding for the installation, operation and maintenance of cycle hire infrastructure, as well as procurement timelines for selecting and contracting with a suitable shared mobility provider are the main dependencies and risks. The trial is likely to depend on third-party partnerships (e.g. cycle hire operators and digital journey planning platforms), which may introduce data sharing, coordination and contractual complexity.

**Privacy Notice:** Agree

**Engagement Expectations:** Agree

# Appendix B: Further example ideas

## How the TEST Programme could help



Example 3:

### Demand-responsive transport in a rural area

#### What is the idea and why is it relevant for TEST?

A public body wants to test whether a flexible transport service improves access for rural communities where fixed-route buses are difficult to sustain.

The trial could assess changes in access to key services, passenger demand, journey patterns, user experience, operating costs and impacts on existing transport options.

#### How will TEST Experts support?

TEST Experts could help ensure the trial collects evidence about who benefits from the scheme, to what extent it is meeting unmet travel need and how it compares with previous or alternative provision.

#### What are the potential outcomes from the programme?

The findings could help decide whether to continue, adapt or expand the service, support future funding decisions, and identify lessons for other rural transport areas.



Example 4:

### Public EV charging infrastructure

#### What is the idea and why is it relevant for TEST?

A public body wants to test whether new public EV charging infrastructure improves access to charging, particularly for residents without the option to have a home charger.

The trial could assess charger use, location suitability, reliability, user experience, impacts on parking, and whether provision supports local EV uptake.

#### How will TEST Experts support?

TEST Experts could help ensure the trial collects evidence about which locations and charging models work best, who is using the chargers and what difference they make compared with the previous provision.

#### What are the potential outcomes from the programme?

The findings could help decide where to expand charging provision, improve future site selection, strengthen investment cases, and support wider local EV infrastructure planning.

# Appendix C: How will we assess ideas

Once the submission window closes, the TEST Expert Team will review all ideas following a consistent process. The aim is to identify ideas that are most likely to benefit from TEST support and generate useful learning for the wider transport sector.

We will first check whether the idea appears suitable for the programme by considering two practical questions:

- **Is the trial likely to go ahead?** For example, is there, or could there be, funding, resource and approvals in place to deliver it?
- **Can the trial fit within the TEST Programme timeframe?** For example, could it be implemented and evaluated within around 12 months, prior to the end of the 3-year programme?

Ideas that meet these initial checks will then be reviewed against two main criteria:

## 1. Evaluation feasibility

We will consider whether the trial could generate high-quality evidence. This includes whether the outcomes can be measured, whether there is likely to be available comparison data, and whether it would be possible to compare what happened as a result of the intervention with what might have happened otherwise.

## 2. Learning potential

We will consider how useful the findings could be for other public bodies. This includes whether the idea addresses a clear transport challenge, whether there is an evidence gap, and whether the learning could be relevant beyond the local area.

The TEST Expert Team will prepare recommendations for DfT, who will make the final decision on which ideas progress. We may contact applicants during the review process if we need to clarify anything in their submission.

All applicants will be contacted with the outcome and feedback on their idea. Where an idea is not taken forward in this round, we will aim to provide constructive feedback, providing an idea assessment to help applicants strengthen their evaluation plans and/or consider applying for a future round.

# TEST

Transport Evaluation Support for Trials



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Visit our website to learn more, submit an idea or register interest: [dft-test-programme.co.uk](http://dft-test-programme.co.uk)

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