

## **NIGHTLINK – PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR THE PARTY CROWD**

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Driven by concerns about safety in Brisbane's nightclub precincts, the Queensland government stepped in to provide innovative all night public transport on Friday and Saturday nights using buses, trains and taxis. In particular the transport system provided by flat fare taxis is both innovative and very popular.

NightLink FlatFare taxi services are of particular interest and uniqueness as they represent one of the few public transport services operated in Australia that does not require additional financial support through subsidy.

This paper discusses the driving forces behind NightLink and the impact of safety perceptions on public transport. It will examine the services provided and the results achieved, in particular for NightLink FlatFare taxi services.

### **ADDRESSING LATE NIGHT PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS IN BRISBANE**

NightLink is the name given to late-night public transport initiatives designed to get people home safely from inner-city Brisbane entertainment precincts on Friday and Saturday nights. These services were introduced in December 2005 to help improve late night public safety.

In February 2005 the Queensland Government confirmed support for initiatives proposed under the Brisbane City Safety Action. The development of this plan was driven by rising public and government concerns about personal safety in Brisbane's nightclub precincts following the occurrence of several tragic incidents involving alcohol-related aggression, some of which led to fatalities.

It was considered that some violent incidents were partly fuelled by the frustration some people felt trying to get home due to a lack of public transport or taxis late at night. Consequently, in September 2005, the Queensland Government approved a number of initiatives to improve late night public transport services in central Brisbane. These initiatives included a decision to provide innovative all night public transport on Friday and Saturday nights using buses, trains and taxis. These late-night services would be marketed as NightLink.

Brisbane is the capital of the state of Queensland, Australia and has a population of approximately 1.56 million people and covers 4,673 square kilometres. Brisbane is part of South East Queensland which stretches from Noosa in the north to Coolangatta in the south, a distance of 250 kilometres and west to Ipswich.

Within the city of Brisbane, three distinct nightclub areas have emerged, the Central Business District (CBD), Fortitude Valley (the Valley) and Caxton Street.

Within the postcode areas of 4000 and 4006 (which cover these three areas) there are 304 premises licensed to serve alcohol and 61 of these are licensed to trade after 3am. There are only 6 premises outside this area licensed to trade after 3am in the rest of Brisbane city.

Patrons emerging from these venues form the majority of demand for public transport services. In general terms, these patrons either constituted a risk or were at risk of anti-social or criminal behaviour due to fatigue, diminished passive surveillance and/or the consumption of alcohol or illicit drugs.

A spate of violent attacks on nightclub patrons led to growing community concerns. Highly publicised assaults led to a perception that the inner city (CBD, Valley and Caxton St) were unsafe, particularly around licensed premises.

The Premier and Minister for Trade hosted a summit on 25 February 2005 of Ministers, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, the Mayor of the Gold Coast, the Qld Police Service, licensees, industry representatives, and community organisations to discuss safety concerns and possible solutions.

During the extensive consultation which followed the following concerns emerged;

Mass transit services (bus and train) ceased operation between 11.30pm and 1:30am at the latest. Services did not recommence until 5:00am at the earliest. This leaves a significant period when at-risk individuals had to rely almost exclusively on taxi services to get home safely. This included people living in outer suburbs for whom the cost of taxi travel could be expensive.

Outward bound bus services on the 13 most popular routes ceased between 11:30pm and 12:45pm and on Saturday and Sunday mornings did not recommence until between 6:30am and 9:00am.

The last Citytrain rail services departed Central Station from between 12:26am (the Gold Coast service) and 1:23am (the Ferny Grove service). Services did not resume across the network until between 5:00am and 5:36am on Saturday mornings and 5:52am and 6:26am on Sundays.

The Brisbane taxi fleet comprised 1658 licensed taxis. 178 were wheelchair accessible, of which 177 were high occupancy maxi taxis.

Average waiting times during December 2004 at existing supervised ranks were found to vary between 3 and 50 minutes with an average between 2 and 40 minutes.

In off holiday times (e.g. April 2005) waiting times were still up to 20 minutes.

Waiting times at unsupervised ranks were often much longer.

Up to this time some attempts had been made to improve the situation including the introduction of additional licences, and the use of the supervisors at a small number of ranks;

Information at the end of this section outlines data about the release of taxi licences in Brisbane since December 04.

In terms of fleet availability, information from Black and White Cabs indicated that the Friday night/Saturday morning shift and the Saturday night/Sunday morning shifts were peak periods for taxi use in Brisbane. B&W data indicated that 97% of its fleet was available for use at these times.

From December 2004 to November 2005 the Brisbane City Council (BCC) funded rank marshals and security guards at six ranks in the CBD and Valley. The ranks operated from midnight to 6am on Friday and Saturday nights.

TCQ surveyed these six ranks on the weekend of 17-19 December 2004. Average waiting times were up to 40 minutes. The longest waiting times at ranks was recorded to be 50 minutes.

A further survey on 1-3 April 2005 showed average waiting times up to 20 minutes.

BCC funded marshals and guards at the following ranks: Treasury Casino, Albert St, Victory Hotel, Macarthur Central (Queen St), The Bowery (Ann St, Valley), McWhirters (Wickham St, Valley)

Evaluation at the time of proposed QT takeover of responsibility for secure ranks was: that the initiative had been welcomed by venue owners and public; taxi drivers felt safer servicing staffed ranks; incidents had been manageable with few requests made for police assistance. Waiting times were still considered by patrons to be unacceptable.

### Release of taxi licences

Brisbane Taxi Licence Releases from 31/12/2004 to 31/04/2007 – Conventional and WAT			
Date From	Date To	Conventional Taxi Licence	Wheelchair Accessible
31/12/2004	30/06/2005	10 (All people- movers)	20
01/07/2005	31/12/2005	31 (Includes 19 with condition that vehicle be a people-mover)	9
01/01/2006	30/06/2006	6	11
01/07/2006	31/12/2006	20 (Includes 10 with condition that vehicle be a people-mover)	26
01/01/2007	30/04/2007	0	0

As at 1 Jun 07, there are 1537 conventional taxis and 225 wheelchair accessible.

A tender for a further 10 conventional taxi service licences with "people mover" conditions and 35 wheelchair accessible taxi service licences closed on 24 April 2007. The successful tenderers have now been notified and are currently in the process of being introduced into service.

## **AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION**

Under the Brisbane City Safety Action Plan, Queensland Transport through its Passenger Transport Division and public transport operator TransLink, undertook to investigate and trial new approaches to provide improved public transport.

Passenger Transport Division comprises 160 staff who provide strategic direction, policy and legislation to oversee passenger transport services in Queensland including the regulation of the bus operators and taxi and limousine industries. Passenger Transport Division also manages the provision of public transport services (bus, air and ferry) in regional Queensland.

TransLink is a separate area of Queensland Transport which plans and operates the public transport system in South East Queensland. TransLink contract for the provision of bus, rail and ferry services and provide public transport infrastructure.

Joint planning sessions were held between Passenger Transport Division and TransLink to plan services which would address the concerns being raised and provide a significantly improved public transport services. Out of this work, the NightLink initiative emerged.

## **NIGHTLINK**

Two broad transport initiatives make up NightLink. Firstly, state government funding was provided for the provision of additional bus and rail services to operate throughout the night. Secondly, Queensland Transport introduced the innovative NightLink FlatFare taxi service.

Apart from the new NightLink transport services, the Queensland Government also approved a number of other transport related measures designed to help improve late night public safety. These included:

- The release of an additional 57 taxi service licences in Brisbane;
- The increase from six to nine secure taxi ranks in the Brisbane CBD, Fortitude Valley and Caxton Street precincts. (The number of secure taxi ranks in inner Brisbane has subsequently increased to 11.);
- Each secure rank would be staffed by rank marshals and security guards;
- Safety upgrades at secure taxi ranks. Upgrades include improved lighting and signage, closed circuit television surveillance, the use of variable message signage and directional signage, and the installation of safety barriers where appropriate;
- The introduction of a \$2 late night surcharge on taxi fares in Brisbane for hirings between midnight and 5.00 am (excluding Anzac Day). The surcharge is retained by drivers and owners and is designed to encourage drivers to work late night shifts.

At commencement in December 2005, the Queensland Government originally provided funding for a six month trial of the new late-night bus and rail services. The government has since committed to the ongoing provision of these services.

Since introduction of the NightLink bus services, there has been occasional changes based on patronage and customer feedback to the services offered. At commencement, NightLink bus services were provided hourly on six routes. An additional ten services were introduced in August 2006. Currently, NightLink bus services are provided over 19 routes from around 1am until 5am.

NightLink bus services depart from dedicated pick up points within inner Brisbane and passengers may be dropped off anywhere along a route where it is safe to do so. Since commencement, NightLink buses have carried over 153 000 passengers.

NightLink trains are provided on three lines, departing the CBD at around 4am and providing an all stops service. NightLink trains are estimated to have carried over 30 000 passengers.

Standard off-peak fares apply for travel on NightLink bus or rail services. All standard ticket types (such as daily, weekly and monthly tickets) are recognised for travel on NightLink bus and rail services. In particular, a daily ticket remains valid until the last NightLink service, so for example, a daily ticket purchased on Friday morning can be used on NightLink services being provided early Saturday morning.

NightLink FlatFare taxi services are operated from “secure taxi ranks”. However not all secure taxi ranks offer NightLink FlatFare taxi services. Before discussing the FlatFare service it will be worthwhile to give a brief overview of secure taxi ranks.

### **Secure Taxi Ranks**

Essentially a secure taxi rank is a taxi rank that is staffed by at least one rank marshal (sourced from a taxi company) and at least one security guard. Most secure taxi ranks are covered by closed circuit television surveillance. Secure taxi ranks generally operate between midnight and around 5am on Saturdays and Sundays (that is, late Friday and Saturday nights) and for some special events. Queensland Transport pays for the provision of rank marshals and security guards at secure taxi ranks and has also paid for various infrastructure improvements.

In Brisbane, the department has an agreement in place with the Taxi Council of Queensland to arrange and manage the staffing of secure taxi ranks (including the NightLink FlatFare taxi ranks). There are also a number of secure taxi ranks in regional Queensland funded by Queensland Transport. The department has similar agreements in place with local regional taxi companies for the provision of rank marshals and security guards at these ranks. For their services, the Taxi Council of Queensland and the involved regional taxi companies are paid administration fees by Queensland Transport.

### **NightLink Flat Fare Taxis**

NightLink FlatFare taxi services will now be considered in more detail. The key features of NightLink FlatFare taxi services are that these services entail organised share-riding in maxi-taxis and the payment of fares before the journey begins.

NightLink FlatFare taxi ranks are staffed by security guards and experienced rank marshals. The rank marshals are sourced from Brisbane’s two taxi booking companies: Yellow Cabs and Black & White Cabs. At a FlatFare rank, the rank marshals organise waiting passengers

so that people who are travelling in the same general direction can share a maxi-taxi (being a vehicle with a higher seating capacity than a standard passenger sedan).

The rank marshal also notifies passengers the fare payable. The fare must be paid before the journey commences.

There are two determinants of the applicable fare: destination and number of people travelling.

Fares for travel in a NightLink FlatFare taxi are determined against a zonal system that radiates outwards from the inner city (which is Zone 1). The Flat Fare zonal system was deliberately based on the TransLink zonal ticketing system that applies to all bus, rail and ferry travel on the TransLink network in South East Queensland. It was considered that using a comparable system to the existing TransLink zonal system would facilitate a better public understanding of the FlatFare zonal system. Consequently it is hoped that a TransLink commuter who regularly crossed three TransLink zones travelling from home to work in the city should not be too fazed by the concept of crossing three Flat Fare zones when catching a NightLink Flat Fare taxi home after attending a spirited office party.

The other determinant of the applicable fare is the number of persons travelling together to the same destination. Accordingly, fares apply for individuals, pairs and groups of five or more persons. Generally, when compared on a per head basis the cost of travel by persons travelling in a group will be less than travel as a couple, which will be less or no more than travel by an individual.

The FlatFare fare matrix in Brisbane has been jointly developed by Queensland Transport with the Taxi Council of Queensland and the two taxi booking companies. A principle of the service is that the fare should be cheaper than the standard applicable fare for a comparable taxi service at that time. However it is also important that drivers find the fare for the journey to be reasonable and attractive; otherwise drivers may avoid the FlatFare ranks.

Passengers can also check fare information on signage at the ranks and on Queensland Transport's website. Operationally, rank marshals use ready reckoners that identify suburbs and corresponding zones. This ensures consistency and accuracy. However the rank marshals have advised that they will charge lower than the official fare if they consider some extenuating circumstance applies. For these exceptions, the fare matrix is in effect setting a maximum fare.

Representatives from Queensland Transport, the Taxi Council of Queensland, Yellow Cabs and Black & White Cabs reviewed the FlatFare fare matrix for the first time about 18 months after the commencement of the service. It should be noted that in this time there had been two increases to standard taxi fares.

Determining a fare matrix to a radial zonal system by suburb can be awkward. For example, a taxi trip requiring river crossings within central Brisbane (Zone 1) can sometimes be quite lengthy and the original Flat Fare fares set for these journeys were probably too cheap. For some suburbs that had broad or elongated boundaries, the FlatFare fares might have seemed reasonable for persons travelling to the outer boundary of that suburb but perhaps not so enticing to their neighbours living closer in. The revised fare matrix has attempted to resolve these anomalies. While still retaining a system covering six zones that is consistent to TransLink's zones, these zones are being split to differentiate an "inner zone" within each zone thereby enabling a larger matrix for fares — for example the fare for travel to Zone 1

(inner) will be less than travel to Zone 1. An outcome of the review is that some NightLink fares will be cheaper than before, some remain the same, and some have increased.

NightLink FlatFare taxi services are currently provided from four dedicated secure taxi ranks in inner Brisbane from around midnight to 5:00am on Saturday and Sunday mornings (that is, Friday and Saturday nights) and for special events. Rank marshals have the authority to vary the hours according to demand on any particular night.

To help establish the Nightlink FlatFare taxi service, Queensland Transport provided top up payments for the drivers of maxi taxis that were specifically assigned to work FlatFare ranks. Under this arrangement, if a FlatFare driver took less than \$70 in fares in an hour the difference would be paid by Queensland Transport.

The need for top ups diminished consistently from commencement of the FlatFare taxi service and were phased out completed by the end of January 2007, at which point the service had been operating for just on 14 months. At first, top ups were paid for up to 30 maxi taxis assigned to FlatFare services. The number of vehicles being subsidised reduced as the services became better known and more popular. By July 2006, the payment of top ups had been reduced to two vehicles for each of the four FlatFare ranks and from this time on the majority of FlatFare services were provided in unsubsidised vehicles. Table 1 below outlines the monthly payment of top ups and shows how these payments decreased.

**Table 1: Payment of top ups by month for period December 2005 to January 2007 inclusive**

Month	Number of nights of operation	Total
December	8	\$39 822.30
January	11	\$39 417.50
February	8	\$29 629.50
March	8	\$19 666.40
April	11	\$20 557.00
May	8	\$15 777.20
June	8	\$12 097.50
July	10	\$9 681.50
August	8	\$10 161.00
September	10	\$11 064.00
October	8	\$9 830.50
November	8	\$8 363.00
December '06	11	\$11 997.50
January '07	9	\$10 085.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>\$248 150.40</b>

The ongoing operation of the NightLink FlatFare taxi service without top up subsidy is indicative of the commercial viability of these services. The rank marshals also reported an incidental benefit of the cessation of top up subsidies: their job became easier. There are two reasons for this: paper work was no longer required to support subsidy claims; and there was no longer a need to prioritise passengers to subsidised vehicles whenever these vehicles returned to the rank. The end of top up payments enabled rank marshals to focus on the job of organising FlatFare share-rides.

### **HOW HAVE NIGHTLINK FLATFARE TAXI SERVICES PERFORMED?**

At commencement, the NightLink FlatFare taxis were introduced under a 12 month trial and were offered from two ranks (Elizabeth Street, City and Warner Street, Fortitude Valley). The service was trialled essentially on a use it or lose it basis. The FlatFare service was reviewed after its first four months of operation and the success at that time supported the

opening of a further two FlatFare ranks (Queen Street and Eagle Street) on 14 July 2006. (The Elisabeth Street rank was recently relocated to the nearby Treasury rank on George Street.).

As previously noted, the NightLink FlatFare taxi service encourages persons travelling in the same direction to share a taxi. At the introduction of the service, a performance target was set for the average number of passengers to be carried per FlatFare trip. This target was set to be an average four passengers per trip. As demonstrated in Table 2, below this target has been continually surpassed. This data indicates that the NightLink FlatFare taxi service helps to maximise the efficiency of Brisbane's maxi taxi fleet.

Table 2 also presents information about the number of passengers carried. NightLink FlatFare taxis carried over 43 000 passengers in its first 12 months. To date, the most FlatFare passengers carried over a single weekend was 2 293 through 16–17 March 2007.

**Table 2: Passengers carried by NightLink FlatFare taxis by quarter**

Quarter	Passengers carried in quarter	Total number of passengers carried to end date	Average number of passengers per trip
1. 02/12/05 – 26/02/06	9256	9256	5.24
2. 03/03/06 – 28/05/06	6419	15 675	5.99
3. 02/06/06 – 26/08/06	9753	25 428	6.03
4. 02/09/06 – 25/11/06	17 684	43 112	6.28
5. 01/12/06 – 24/02/07	16 173	59 285	5.94

Notes to Table 2

Each quarter represents a 13 week period of FlatFare services provided on Friday and Saturday nights. The decline in the second quarter follows seasonal high demand for taxis through the festive period. The number of FlatFare taxi service ranks increased from two to four on 14 July 2006.

Another performance indicator for the success of NightLink transport services (bus, rail and taxi) and secure taxi ranks was determined to be waiting times at taxi ranks. From the commencements of these initiatives, the marketing analysis company Colmar Brunton has undertaken taxi rank surveys for Queensland Transport. The purpose of these surveys is to monitor the performance of secure taxi ranks and provide some measure of the impact of NightLink transport services on waiting times at secure taxi ranks. The first survey was taken in November 2005 just prior to the commencement of the NightLink initiative. Follow up surveys were undertaken in March and November 2006 and in April 2007. The surveys are

taken between midnight and 5:00am on Saturday and Sunday mornings at secure taxi ranks other than the NightLink FlatFare taxi ranks.

These surveys enable a comparison of data collected at seven secure taxi ranks at each survey. Table 3 below compares information taken from surveys in November 2005, November 2006, and April 2007. This data is discussed further below.

**Table 3: Comparison of taxi rank performance data across three survey periods.**

The data presented represents totals or averages calculated from the total ten hour duration for each survey.			
Survey period	Passengers carried	Taxi trips from ranks	Average passenger waiting time (minutes)
November 2005	3 969	1 969	15
November 2006	7 089	3 668	15
April 2007	10 106	5 169	4

When compared to the November 2005 survey, the April 2007 survey showed that at the same seven secure taxi ranks:

- Patronage during the cumulative 10 hour survey period had increased from 3 969 to 10 106 - an increase of 154.6%;
- Taxi trips leaving these ranks had increased from 1 969 to 5 169 — an increase of 162.5%.
- The average passenger waiting time had decreased from 15 minutes to 4 minutes.

To take into account possible seasonal effects, a comparison of data from November 2005 to November 2006 can be taken. Such a comparison shows that in the 12 month period following the introduction of these services that:

- Patronage during the cumulative 10 hour survey period had increased from 3 969 to 7 089 — an increase of 78.6%;
- Taxi trips leaving these ranks had increased from 1 969 to 3668 — an increase of 86.2%.
- The average passenger waiting time had remained steady at 15 minutes.

During the weekend of the April 2007 rank survey, the longest wait recorded at a secure taxi rank was 39 minutes at the Ann Street rank on a Sunday morning. This person arrived at the rank at 1:17am. However, waiting times of around 15-20 minutes were recorded for other passengers who arrived just before and after this person, suggesting that the person was unable for some reason to take available taxis at the rank.

The results indicate the rising popularity of the secure taxi ranks. Furthermore, even while patronage figures have continued to increase waiting times throughout the surveys have either

remained steady or decreased. This indicates that the operational efficiency of these staffed ranks is continually improving.

A number of factors may be seen as indicators as success for the NightLink FlatFare taxi services. Continually increasing patronage may be considered indicative of growing public awareness and acceptance of the FlatFare service and the safer environment facilitated at these ranks.

The active involvement of taxi rank marshals and rank security guards has been important to the success of FlatFare service. Rank marshals actively canvass the FlatFare service and will seek new and potential users from nearby standard ranks. Some, if not most, FlatFare rank marshals are regular workers on the ranks. Several marshals have indicated that they really enjoy working these ranks, getting involved with people and arranging share rides. Rank marshals report establishing friendly customer client relationships with regular FlatFare service patrons.

The rank marshals have also reported that support from the Queensland Police Service has grown since the commencement of these ranks. The rank marshals have reported that the police are now usually highly responsive when called upon for assistance, especially in Fortitude Valley. It has been suggested that this was perhaps due to greater recognition from local police of the work rank marshals do to get people home quickly and thereby reducing the potential for trouble.

As shown earlier, the average number of passengers carried continually surpasses the performance target (of an average 4 passengers per trip) set out the outset of the NightLink FlatFare initiative. Apart from this being further evidence of the healthy patronage of these services, this achievement is also shows that the share-riding aspect of the FlatFare service is working well. This share-riding helps improve the efficiency and capability of Brisbane's maxi-taxi fleet to service large numbers of late night travellers.

## **HOW HAVE NIGHTLINK BUS AND RAIL SERVICES PERFORMED?**

The Queensland Government in initiating the NightLink system was committing to a large expenditure of taxpayers funds and considerable effort to organise and manage the services.

How the system performed and what value for money was achieved was critical. A comprehensive performance review process was planned and implemented including;

- Collection of patronage data
- User satisfaction
- Community awareness of the NightLink services available
- Perceptions of safety and security

Queensland Treasury and the Department of Premier and Cabinet agreed to the performance measures in the table below to determine the effectiveness of the trial.

Performance Criteria	Measure	Target
Public Transport Services	Minimum mean occupancy rates for each bus and train service	14 patrons per bus service 85 patrons per train service
	Waiting times at secure inner Brisbane ranks	Reduction in waiting time
	Passenger satisfaction	60% satisfaction with services
Safety and Security	Reported incidents of criminal and anti-social behaviour on NightLink bus and train services	No significant increase in reported incidents based upon pre-trial Queensland Police Service statistics
	Reported incidents of criminal and anti-social behaviours at destination locations	No significant increase in reported incidents based upon pre-trial Queensland Police Service statistics
Awareness	How many people are aware of NightLink services	50% of people attending entertainment venues in the Inner city

### **Patronage Targets**

NightLink services commenced in December 2005, in the lead up to the festive season. December 2005 patronage figures show that the services were well utilised with the trains averaging 81 patrons per service and buses 36 patrons per service.

### **Waiting times at secure ranks**

Waiting times at secure ranks were measured before the trial (November 2005) and after the six months of the trial (May 2006). The average waiting time at secure ranks had reduced by over 50% from 15 minutes to 7 minutes. This is a significant reduction, although it should be noted that the associated NightLink flat fare taxi product was also in operation during the trial period. The Colmar Brunton in-venue survey (see below) showed that over 60% of respondents believed that NightLink services reduced taxi queue waiting times.

### **Passenger Satisfaction**

Market research was undertaken through Colmar Brunton to measure customer satisfaction, awareness and to identify possible improvements to services. The following key findings are relevant;

- Over 63% of respondents were aware of the NightLink services;
- Over 92% of those who have used the service found the experience positive and would use the service again

- Cost and convenience were the two most positive elements of the NightLink products reported by respondents
- 25% of non-users didn't use the service because the services did not travel close enough to their home. Most commonly mentioned features that respondents did not like about the services were that they did not go where they live and the services were not frequent enough. These features were the two most commonly cited improvements to the system.

### **Perceptions of Safety and Security**

The indicator originally proposed as a performance measure was the number of reported incidents based upon Queensland Police Service statistics. Agencies contemplating introducing similar late night public transport systems should note that Queensland has found it difficult to measure perceptions of safety and security, as a number of other programs aimed at improving safety were also introduced as part of the Government's Brisbane City Safety Action Plan.

Qualitative interviews were undertaken with supervising shift officers to obtain an understanding of the impacts of the services on the safety of patrons. It should be noted that NightLink is one of the 17 initiatives in the Safety Action Plan and any reduction in the number of safety incidents is likely to be due to a combination of initiatives. The results of these interviews can be summarised as follows;

- There has been a reduction in the number, severity and scale of incidents in the inner city;
- Altercations around venue closing times have been markedly reduced
- There are less people loitering to find transport, which reduced the probability of negative interactions and therefore incidents
- Security guards on both taxi ranks and bus services have been positive

NightLink services of course deliver people to suburban areas who then use other means to arrive at their destination. It was imperative that through the introduction of the NightLink transport system that the issue of safety and security in the city was then moved to suburban areas. Suburban police districts have reported that there have been no incidents attributable to the provision of NightLink services.

### **MARKETING**

It was recognised that effective marketing would be a key component of NightLink's success. The challenge was to introduce innovative services to a young demographic who would not normally be responsive to government messages. The difficulty in getting this message across was exacerbated by the fact that the young demographic could be under the influence at the time services were being marketed. To respond to this, an innovative campaign targeted at this specific demographic and environment was designed.

A wide range of media was employed;

- Radio
- Street Press
- Mobile billboards
- Internet banner advertising

- Convenience (toilet) advertising
- Transit media (busway station light boxes and hangers onboard services)
- Mainstream press (majority metropolitan daily newspapers, as well as series of free community newspaper and magazines)
- Street banners

This media was supported by appropriate public relations activities in the nightclub precinct such as;

- A NightLink pocket pal (wallet size timetable) was produced and made widely available at entertainment venues and from usual public transport information outlets
- In-venue promotions – this included NightLink admission stamps, drink coasters, posters, pocket timetables, caps for staff, free advertisements on music video screens and free banner advertisements on venue websites
- Promotional staff in popular city street locations and inside pubs and clubs distributing information and merchandise

A major media launch with the Minister for Transport, regular media releases throughout the trial period and editorial submissions in various magazines and newsletters.

Market research was conducted in the lead up and during the trial period to test demand, evaluate the program and refine the product to better meet customer needs:

- Demand for late night services taxi queue survey, May 2005 (Colmar Brunton)
- NightLink in-venue research, May 2006 (Colmar Brunton)
- Pre-NightLink taxi rank waiting time survey, November 2005 (Colmar Brunton)
- Post-NightLink taxi rank waiting time survey, April 2006 (Colmar Brunton)
- NightLink onboard survey, December 2005 and May 2006 (Colmar Brunton)

The primary audience was 18 to 30 year old people who attend inner city Brisbane entertainment venues (pubs, bars and nightclubs) after midnight on Friday and Saturday nights. The challenge was to communicate a serious message about convenient and safe transport options while the target group was out having a good time and most likely intoxicated.

Market research into young people drinking at risky levels was used to provide detail about this particular target market to assist with the development of effective creative concepts.

The campaign also needed to raise awareness of the new services among the wider Brisbane community, especially parents (tertiary audience), licensed venue operators, hospitality staff and existing passengers using 'normal' services operating in NightLink corridors (secondary audience).

It was particularly important that the creative approaches used within this campaign took into account the diverse needs of both the primary and secondary audiences.

For the primary audience, the campaign presented NightLink as an integral part of a good night out. Creatively, the tone was engaging and non-threatening; delivering key messages in a light-hearted and memorable way the core audience could relate with. Some of the tag lines developed for the may be considered to be cheeky or risqué, however it is important to note the following:

- Messages used within the creative needed to be simple and memorable as the audience are likely to be impaired by alcohol when exposed to each execution.
- Messages were intended to be attention grabbers and therefore generate conversation amongst peer groups.
- The more risqué messages were not used within mainstream public view, but very targeted to gender-specific convenience locations inside licensed venues (male and female restrooms).
- Radio advertisements in the breakfast, morning afternoon and drive timeslots were also used to create interest and awareness among the youth market. Dance music positioned NightLink as an essential element of night out in inner city Brisbane.
- Messages intended for the secondary and tertiary audiences adopted a conservative approach appropriate to the wider audience, while still maintaining a light-hearted approach through the use of clever tag lines.

Elements common to both streams of the campaign included TransLink and Queensland Government branding. As normal TransLink fares are charged and pre-purchased TransLink tickets accepted for travel on NightLink services, it was important audiences made a connection between the late night services and TransLink. Therefore these services were branded NightLink, with all printed materials accompanied by TransLink and Queensland Government co-branding elements. The use of Queensland Government logo also ensures the audience were aware that NightLink is part of a broader government initiative to improve safety in the Inner City environs.

Furthermore, the dominant black in the creative design further reinforces the late night nature of the services. Simple photographs of buses, trains and taxis features in the design to increase the awareness that NightLink was late night public transport.

The information on the creative was also kept simple, with the call to action to visit the TransLink website or phone the TransLink call centre for more information. The TransLink call centre extended its operation hours to field timetables enquiries for NightLink services (open 6am Friday until 9pm Sunday).

The campaign was jointly funded and developed by TransLink and Passenger Transport, both divisions of Queensland Transport, Red Suit Advertising was commissioned to develop the creative and media plan for the campaign.

Prior to the campaign launch, Queensland Transport briefed numerous industry and community groups to gain their support. Many of these groups also provided excellent feedback and ideas for the marketing campaign.

A comprehensive marketing plan was developed by internal resources and approved by the Queensland Government in November 2005, with the campaign launched a week prior to services commencing in early December 2005.

The selection of appropriate advertising and public relations channels was done jointly by internal and agency staff with emphasis on non-traditional media to ensure memorability. This included used of mobile billboards, radio, street press and convenience advertising.

Weekly patronage reports were prepared and collated across all NightLink operators to gain their continual feedback.

Pre and post campaign research was conducted to measure the effectiveness of the campaign and services. Following the results of an onboard survey, the bus route in the inner city was revised to better service the entertainment precincts in the Central Business District.

Gaining the support and cooperation of licensed venues was particularly instrumental in the success of the campaign. In particular, two key licensees operating in Fortitude Valley, who are considered leaders in their industry, strongly encouraged other venues to support the initiative to sustain the economic livelihood of the area. Venues stocked NightLink promotional material free of charge and allowed NightLink staff to conduct promotions onsite.

The media strategy to support both the launch and ongoing campaign was developed through a detailed analysis of the target market, and most critically, the target market's lifestyle.

A "week in the life" matrix of the target was considered and informed a large part of the media scheduling in terms of placement and timing. A typical week can be divided in two parts: Front End (Monday-Wednesday) and Back End (Thursday-Sunday). The Front End of the week is typically spent 'in' (home) and the Back Ends is spent "going out".

Placement in a variety of street press was scheduled at the Front End of the week, when the target is planning its Back End. These publications target the club and pub goers specifically when they are planning their outings. Consideration was given to other vehicles that engaged the consumer at the Front End of the week, such as television and radio, but budget limitations ruled out both media other than in the preceding and first week campaign. At this time a radio schedule targeting stations most relevant to the demographic was executed.

At the Back end of the week Ambient Media, such as Mobile Billboards (D'Lites) and Convenience Advertising (Male and Female toilets at selected venues), dominated. The appeal of Ambient Media is its capacity to optimise message cut-through by leveraging environments and occasions where the creative message can be tightly matched to the situation. At the time when they are out and experiencing first-hand the realities of getting home late at night, Ambient Media had a relevant and high-impact presence.

In addition to media specifically targeting late night revellers, mainstream press was scheduled in the week leading up to the first Friday night of the trial and the second week of the trial. The Sunday Mail and Courier Mail, Quest newspapers, City news and Brisbane News were selected to inform the wider community of the initiative and its impending launch.

Research conducted in taxi queues revealed that two-thirds of respondents attended Inner City venues after 10pm on weekends at least twice a month. This indicated the campaign didn't need to last the entire duration of the trial for it to be effective, A majority of the target audience was likely to be exposed to the NightLink message in venues and entertainment precincts at least twice during the initial stage of the campaign (late November 2005 to New Year's Eve). Infrequent revellers were also likely to be exposed to the NightLink message as they participated in various festive seasons activities during this same period.

Therefore, the campaign was launched with a "big bang" approach during the festive season, before dying down during the quite summer holiday period in January 2006. The campaign was ramped up again February to coincide with the return university.

2004/2005 research conducted by Queensland Health for its campaign targeting young women drinking at risky levels provides target market detail relevant for this campaign:

- Going out is about having fun 'blowing of steam', animation, energy, happiness, laughter and confidence and getting more out of life.
- A sense of being and staying in control of any situation is important
- The notion of being told what to do is on they reject – especially by the government
- Social activities usually involve alcohol and, outside of the home were conducted at pubs and clubs.
- Clubs were the preferred Friday and Saturday night venues.
- A great weekend involves the right atmosphere, good music, enough money to have fun, no work or stresses and being with friends.
- The relative cost of pubs and clubs determines where they go, as lack of money is a barrier to having a great night.
- Safety concerns are not considered too much of an issue as they believe they are in control of their situations enough to minimise risk.
- The claim to have friends who "look out for each other", mobile phones (with enough credit for an emergency) and a preparedness to call "mum" for help if they get into trouble late at night.

The insights gained from this research in relation to the NightLink campaign centre around:

- The target market's desire to maintain control of their situation.
- Their quest for fun on Friday and Saturday nights.
- Their recognition of the financial cost of going out and the potential limitations a lack of funds can impose on a good night out.
- Their lack of overt concern in relation to safety issues associated with going out.

Poster

# Last rounds.



**New NightLink FlatFare maxis.**  
11pm till 5.30am. Friday and Saturday nights.

From secure ranks in Warner St, the Valley and Elizabeth St, CBD.  
[www.transport.qld.gov.au](http://www.transport.qld.gov.au)

Queensland Transport encourages responsible consumption of alcohol.

Queensland Government  
Queensland Transport

Beer Coaster

# “Maxi!”



**The cheaper shout. New NightLink FlatFare maxis.**  
11pm till 5.30am. Friday & Saturday nights.

[www.transport.qld.gov.au](http://www.transport.qld.gov.au)

Queensland Government  
Queensland Transport

# Some great pick up lines...

Jump on a NightLink train. Hourly from 12 midnight till 5am.  
Friday and Saturday nights.

**TRANSLink** SMS or call **13 12 30**

## SUCCESS FACTORS

- Researching the need adequately
- Earlier unsuccessful public transport attempts provided learnings
- High levels of cooperation between policy makers, operators, taxi service provider (Black & White Taxis and Yellow Cabs) and other stakeholders (Brisbane City Council and the Valley Traders Association).
- Innovative and confronting marketing campaign targeted at relevant demographic
- Willingness of stakeholders to try a different approach and be innovative in solutions
- Seeking to use available transport and taxi services to the fullest extent
- Receptive patrons