



## Seattle's "Park It. Cab It. Transit." Campaign

### Plan for Late Night Transportation Alternatives

Provision of safe and accessible late-night transportation options is a top priority of the Seattle Nightlife Initiative, launched in July 2010. Minimal after-midnight bus service and perceived difficulty in catching a taxi led many nightlife patrons to drive personal automobiles to/from nightlife districts. Closing time challenges due to limited transport alternatives included DUI, loitering, noise, disorderly conduct and competition with residents for parking. These impacts propelled the city of Seattle to propose a multi-pronged plan to provide safer and more efficient late-night transit options. The three delivery channels include: 1) Enhanced Late-Night Bus Service, 2) Establishment of Late-Night Taxi Zones and 3) Introduction of Pre-Paid Overnight Parking.

---

### Problem Statement

Most transit (i.e. bus) service in Seattle was oriented toward daytime riders, focused especially on morning and evening commuters. The frequency of transit service dropped significantly in the evening hours, with only minimal service available after midnight. Taxis provided consistent service in Seattle's hospitality zones, yet patrons reported long wait times and difficulty in hailing one due to competition with other late-night passengers. Further, nightlife patrons were reluctant to leave their car downtown for fear of being ticketed and towed, as there was no possibility of pre-purchasing parking for the following morning. Without well-organized and reliable nighttime transit service, nightlife patrons frequently chose to drive to/from the hospitality zone, despite the risks.

Usage of personal automobiles in lieu of late-night transit alternatives presented the following challenges:

Increased potential for alcohol-related fatalities and casualties due to impaired drivers.

Inhibited egress from nightlife districts at closing time due to greater car traffic. This also led to greater likelihood for patrons to loiter on streets, generating noise and behavior impacts.

Generated competition for limited public parking usage by both nighttime patrons and residents who live near business districts.

Negatively impacted the city's climate protection objectives.

While noise, disorderly conduct and driving while intoxicated could be addressed through enforcement, representatives in the city of Seattle recognized that they could also be minimized through improving late-night transportation options and choices. The need was therefore identified to develop a comprehensive late-night transportation plan.

## Stakeholders

- City government representatives worked with King County Metro Transit and nightlife businesses to raise awareness of existing transit options.
- City government representatives worked with property owners and businesses in the primary nightlife districts – Downtown, Belltown, Pioneer Square, Broadway, University District and Ballard – to set up late-night taxi zones.
- City government representatives worked with nightlife establishments in business districts to make the pre-paid parking option known to their customers and publicize the option on pay station graphics.
- The taxi company, Taxi Magic (taximagic.com) partnered with the City to offer passengers a convenient ride-request service via Smart Phone application.

## Process

The City of Seattle's new late-night transportation programming was launched as part of the Seattle Nightlife Initiative, which debuted in July 2010. The Seattle Nightlife Initiative is a proposal with eight components for creating a safe and vibrant nighttime economy. (Learn more at <http://mayormcginn.seattle.gov/nightlife/>) In addition to the objective of safe and accessible late-night transportation options, the City simultaneously initiated development of a new assistance and enforcement strategy with nightlife businesses, new security training requirements for nightclubs, noise ordinance enforcement, and a targeted approach to addressing public nuisances. Increased business opportunity via flexible alcohol service hours has also been proposed. The effectiveness of these late-night transportation alternatives was considered to be contingent upon the successful implementation of the broader master plan for enhancing Seattle's nightlife.

Three Late-night Transit Delivery Channels were Developed:

1. "Nightowl" Service: Enhanced Late-Night Bus (Transit) Service
2. Establishment of Late-Night Taxi Zones (Will be fully implemented at the end of September 2011)
3. "The Liquor Sticker": Introduction of Pre-Paid, Overnight Parking

Each will be discussed in greater depth below.

Delivery Channel #1: Enhanced Late Night Bus (Transit) Service – the "Nightowl"

Although transit frequency in the evening and early morning hours will never match that of rush hour, transit has proven to be a viable and convenient option for many in the evening.

The City of Seattle therefore worked with the King County Metro to provide extended service hours for select routes to bring passengers home safely.

King County Metro reoriented routes and extended hours for late-night and early-morning trips departing downtown Seattle. Nearly a dozen routes are now available departing downtown Seattle at 2:15am and eight routes are also available leaving downtown at 3:30am. An online transit trip planner is available to help passengers plan their trip.

To enhance bus transit service (the “Nightowl”) for the nighttime passenger market, the following steps were taken:

- Promoted existing transit service: Limited marketing and awareness of available late night transit service led the City of Seattle to work with King County Metro Transit and the nightlife community to promote bus transit as a viable option for patrons.
- Determined how to efficiently allocate limited evening transit service hours. Despite initial resistance to extending bus transit hours given proposed cuts during daytime hours, the City opted to pursue extended transit hours on select routes.
- Incorporated suggestions for late-night transit options in development of the Transit Master Plan, which will guide transit service investments for the coming decade. The city of Seattle worked with the King County Metro Transit to ensure that late-night hours service provision will be considered in the Transit Master Plan process.
- Provided safe, well lit places to wait for a bus during late-night hours of operation. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) practices and public safety concerns were taken into account when determining where facilities would be located.

Delivery Channel #2: Establishment of Late-night Taxi Zones:

In order to make taxis a more efficient and dependable late-night transport option in concentrated nightlife destinations, the City proposed creation of late-night taxi zones. By the end of September, 2011, five new late night taxi zones will be established by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), and will be strategically located in proximity to nightlife establishments in Belltown, Pioneer Square, Capitol Hill, Downtown/Pike Place and Fremont. Ten existing taxi stands will be upgraded with new promotional branding and painted curbs with signs on both sides. A total of fifteen taxi zones will be in effect by the end of September, 2011.

These new zones will provide a safe and visible sidewalk location for people to hail a taxi. Such concentrated taxi zones will also make cabs more visible and allow them to queue to handle greater demand when needed. Zones will accommodate up to four taxis during the hours of 10 pm and 6 am. No changes will be made to on-street parking policies during regular business hours. The initial installation of taxi zones is being limited to a small handful of neighborhoods to pilot the initiative. If further demand for similar zones is identified elsewhere, the SDOT will consider other installations.

An additional user-friendly benefit of the taxi zones was made possible via a public-private partnership between the City and Taxi Magic. Taxi Magic provides the first free nationwide online taxi booking service that is directly integrated with taxi dispatch systems. If a taxi isn't readily available at one of the new, designated taxi stands, passengers can scan a code from their mobile phone to book a cab online. Passengers will be able to track the arrival of their cab and charge the ride to their credit card.

Steps to develop this program included the following:

- Created a Stakeholder Alliance: City government representatives outreached to property owners and businesses in the primary nightlife districts – Downtown, Belltown, Pioneer Square, Broadway, University District and Ballard – to set up late-night taxi zones.
- Public-Private Partnership was developed between City government representatives and Taxi Magic to incorporate online taxi booking service technology into the new taxi stands.
- Promoted Awareness among Nightlife Venues: City government has worked with nightlife establishments in business districts to make this option known to their customers. A map with locations of late-night taxi zones will be provided to establishments. Nightlife establishments will also be encouraged to work with limo operators to make arrangements for taking people home.
- Identified safe, well lit places to wait for a taxi during late-night hours of operation. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) practices and public safety concerns were taken into account when determining where taxi zones will be located.

Delivery Channel #3: Introduction of Overnight Parking:

Prior to implementation of this initiative, impaired individuals may have felt compelled to drive their car home for fear of receiving parking tickets or having their car towed if they left their vehicle in the nightlife district overnight. To provide an alternative to driving home under the influence, the City developed an innovative pre-paid parking option so that individuals could leave their car on the street at metered parking (which requires payment between 8am-8pm) and pick up their car the next morning.

A promotional campaign to explain how the initiative works included the following text:

"Sometimes plans change. An old friend shows up at the bar. The work meeting turns into work drinking. The night just gets away from you. But you drove to the bar - now what to do?"

We want to give people the option to change their plans, stay safe and still have a good time. That's why the Mayor asked our Department of Transportation to reprogram all parking pay stations to open at 10 p.m. so drivers can pay for those first two hours the next morning, giving themselves a little more time to get home safely and retrieve their vehicles the next day. We are working with nightlife establishments in business districts to make this option known to their customers and publicize the option on pay station graphics.

Every pay station in Seattle is now programmed this way. All you have to do is go back to your car after 10 PM, use the pay station to purchase a parking sticker for the next morning, and you're safe to park until 10 AM. Next time you hear someone say - "I'm fine to drive, don't worry about it," remind them that they can always leave their car parked where it is and pick it up by 10 AM the next day. It's the responsible thing to do."

Steps to accomplish this program included the following:

- **Change in On-Street Parking Policy:** Previously, the City's on-street parking pay stations did not allow the pre-purchase of parking for the following morning. To provide an incentive to not drive home impaired, the Mayor asked SDOT (Seattle Department of Transportation) to reprogram all pay stations to open at 10 p.m. so drivers could pay for the first two hours (8-10am) the next morning, giving themselves a little more time to get home safely and retrieve their vehicles the next day.
- **Stakeholder Alliance:** City government representatives worked with nightlife establishments in business districts to make this option known to their customers and publicize the option on pay station graphics.
- **Promotion:** Starting April 21, 2011, new blue and yellow informational stickers were posted to explain changes on the pay stations in the Pike-Pine and Capitol Hill neighborhoods. The stickers are now on all pay stations.

## Outcome

There is a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the three late-night transportation delivery channels a year after implementation – approximately September, 2012. Data that will be analyzed will include use of TaxiMagic's online booking service, ridership of the Nightowl bus, and use of the pre-paid parking system.

Anticipated benefits and outcomes include the following:

Enhancement of Seattle's nightlife experience for neighborhoods, hosting establishments, patrons and employees.

Reduction in alcohol-related accidents and injuries.

Decrease in public safety incidents and quality of life complaints (e.g. fights, noise, disorderly conduct, public urination, traffic at closing time).

Greater efficiency in clearing nightlife districts after closing time.

Increased ability for the city to meet climate protection objectives.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

Cost of providing new or extended late-night transportation options presented a significant obstacle during a time when budget cuts proposed reduction of transit services. However, the public safety benefits of providing alternatives to driving under the influence were considered to outweigh the costs.

A small minority of businesses resisted the idea of locating taxi stands in front of their establishments, yet the large majority supported this initiative, which led to the decision to move forward with the plan.

## Jurisdiction

All three late-night transportation delivery channels (bus service, late night taxi zones, and overnight parking) have been implemented citywide to encompass all major nightlife districts.

## Funding

Funding came from the City's transportation fund, comprised of some dedicated transportation resources and some general fund resources.

## Spin-off Projects

There is interest in exploring other options to fill transit gaps, such as fixed-route jitneys, shared taxis, and pedicabs. Jitneys are typically a little larger than a cab and smaller than a bus. Some have regular routes and hours, while others have flexible schedules. The Department of Finance and Administrative Services plans to work with the Department of Transportation to assess potential demand for such services.

Start Date: Spring 2011

## Contact

James Keblas, Director, City of Seattle, Mayor's Office of Film and Music  
More Information: <http://seattle.gov/nightlife/>