

SAFER TRAVEL AT NIGHT

Transport for London



Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing 2006

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Safer Travel at Night (STaN)

Partner Agencies: Transport for London and the Metropolitan Police Service / Greater London Authority

In 2002 analysis by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) showed that 212 sexual offences were committed by illegal minicab drivers between October 2001 and September 2002; 54 of these women were raped. The number of sexual assaults in illegal minicabs was rising and forming a substantial proportion of those sexual assaults in London committed by offenders not previously known to the victim. This was a serious problem affecting Londoners and visitors to London.

Contributing to this was that taxi touting was an endemic problem in central London and posed a serious risk to the travelling public. Statistics showed that unlicensed minicabs provided a cover for some of the most serious crime in London including sexual attacks on women. Local isolated responses were having a limited effect on this serious problem and a coordinated response was needed.

Further analysis by key stakeholders identified a number of underlying conditions that contributed to this serious problem:

- ◆ The public was unaware of the laws relating to private hire vehicles (minicabs), i.e., it is illegal for minicabs to ply for hire on the street and that minicab journeys must be booked through a licensed minicab office.
- ◆ The public was unaware of the dangers of using illegal minicabs.
- ◆ The illegal minicab industry was operating in a largely unregulated market with little enforcement and with no real legal deterrent.
- ◆ The public was unaware of the legitimate travel alternatives at night and how to access them.
- ◆ Travel options were limited at night.

Traditionally, the response to this type of situation had focussed on detecting and apprehending the offender. Little else was being done to address the other elements of the problem analysis triangle, i.e. victim and location. A coordinated, systematic and broader approach was needed to address the underlying conditions that were contributing to the growing number of sexual assaults in illegal minicabs. To this end the STaN partnership was created to undertake further analysis and problem solving and to implement any actions identified.

STaN is a partnership between the Mayor of London / Greater London Authorityⁱ, Transport for London (TfL)ⁱⁱ and the Metropolitan Police Serviceⁱⁱⁱ, who are working together with organisations across the capital to help make London safer at night. STaN is a programme of integrated activities covering delivery of services and projects through transport, policing, and providing public information.

STaN aims to reduce the number of sexual attacks on women in illegal minicabs by both traditional police activity and by cracking down on illegal taxi touts, delivering improved late night travel services and information and raising public awareness about the risks of using illegal minicabs.

STaN has been successful in reducing the number of sexual assaults on women in illegal minicabs in London. Numbers have fallen from an average of 18 women to 10 women a month being attacked in illegal minicabs since 2002. In addition, the percentage of women using illegal minicabs has fallen from 18% to 7% over this period.

SCANNING AND ANALYSIS

In 2002, Project Sapphire, a unit of London's Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) responsible for improving victim care and investigating sexual offences, identified that 18 women a month were being sexually assaulted in illegal minicabs. The MPS reported that in the year leading up to October 2002, 212 women were sexually assaulted in illegal minicabs; 54 had been raped.

London is one of the most cosmopolitan, vibrant and energetic cities in the world and is increasingly becoming a 24-hour city. Over half a million people regularly go clubbing at the weekend with many more visiting pubs, theatres and other activities in the evening. While London is safe for most people travelling at night there were major concerns over the number of sexual attacks and the dangers for women travelling in illegal minicabs.

Further scanning of the problem coordinated by the Stan Project Board highlighted the problems with taxi touting more generally. Although the government and the police were aware that taxi touting was widespread across London it wasn't until the problem of sexual assaults in illegal minicabs was highlighted that it focussed their attention on the extent and seriousness of the problem. The police had been trying to tackle the taxi touting problem across London but were having no real impact on reducing the supply of or demand for illegal minicabs. Furthermore, taxi touting was being dealt with as a minor traffic offence and not as an issue that could act as a gateway into serious crime.

It is an offence for private hire vehicles (PHV), also known as minicabs, to ply for hire in the street in the United Kingdom. The offence for 'Tout for business – private hire / other vehicle' is a criminal offence under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Those arrested and charged with taxi touting are also charged with having no valid insurance. Drivers that tout for business are commonly referred to as taxi touts or illegal minicabs. Research has shown that many of these illegal taxi touts are linked with more serious crimes.

Taxi touting was a prevalent problem in the capital, particularly in the West End. The West End, although geographically small, is London's main entertainment district and was a magnet for illegal taxi touts. The combination of no significant legal deterrent to touting, their availability and relatively low price in comparison to London's licensed black taxis, a lack of awareness amongst the public regarding the laws surrounding minicabs and a lack of awareness of the potential risks amongst passengers, allowed the minicab market to thrive. Taxi touting provided an ideal cover for sexual predators.

The police expected that the number of attacks on women would rise in what appeared to be a growing illegal minicab trade operating in the city. Numbers of sexual assaults in illegal minicabs had risen to over 200 reported sexual assaults in illegal minicabs over a year compared with 66 in 1997. The police acknowledge that the numbers are likely to be far higher given the radical under-reporting of sexual assaults. Women travelling in illegal minicabs were putting themselves in serious danger. In 2002, the Times newspaper reported that taxi

touts were one of the most underrated and fastest-rising dangers of city nightlife.

The MPS undertook detailed analysis of these predatory crimes to test the hypothesis that a large percentage of stranger rapes and sexual attacks were committed by sexual offenders purporting to be minicab drivers. The analysis findings confirmed this. Further spatial and temporal analysis was undertaken and trends identified. The analysis identified patterns in the three major components of the problem analysis triangle - the victim, offender and location.

The police recognised that the details provided by victims were sometimes hazy or incomplete as the victims were often intoxicated at the time of the incident. However, the majority of victims were able to confirm that they had got into a minicab in the West End after leaving a late night venue. Analysis of the crime data identified that approximately 80% of the sexual assaults in illegal minicabs over this year originated with a pick up in the West End. All of these attacks were committed by taxi touts – the journeys were not pre-booked through a licensed minicab office.

The targets were young women who were travelling alone. The analysis found that in nearly 50% of cases the victims were aged 24 or under and 91% of victims aged 35 or under.

This full crime analysis exercise was supplemented by an in-depth analysis of taxi touting activity and market usage of late night transport services undertaken by TfL. Research was undertaken to gain a better understanding of illegal minicab touting behaviour at identified hotspots across London. This helped the key stakeholders to better understand the touting problem and aid the evaluation of anti-touting initiatives. Surveys were also commissioned to gain a better understanding of the night time travel patterns of Londoners, including the use of minicabs.

Baseline results showed that that the overwhelming majority of minicab users in the West End picked up one in the street or outside the venue, rather than booking it from a minicab office, giving illegal minicabs a 14% total market share in the West End area prior to STaN initiatives being implemented.

A number of contributory factors were identified as part of the analysis stage. The most significant factors included:

- ◆ lack of public awareness of the laws surrounding minicabs;
- ◆ lack of public awareness of the potential risks associated with illegal minicabs;
- ◆ an active illegal minicab trade that was operating in a largely unregulated market with little enforcement and with no real legal deterrent;
- ◆ legitimate travel options were limited at night and the public was unaware of how to access them.

Local borough police (BOCUs) had been adopting different local approaches to tackling the problems of sexual assaults and illegal taxi touting^{iv}. These offender-based strategies were not effective in reducing the number of sexual assaults on women in illegal minicabs.

RESPONSE

It was clear from the early scanning and analysis stages that this problem could not be addressed wholly by an individual agency and that a multi-faceted and coordinated approach was needed. The response had to shift the focus from an offender based strategy to one that covered all aspects of the crime triangle. Conventional policing alone could not tackle this acute problem so the MPS joined forces with the GLA and TfL. The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, made a commitment to improve the safety of people travelling at night and launched the Safer Travel at Night (STaN) Initiative in October 2002. Under this Project Board, a number of further scanning and analysis activities were undertaken and further informed the response stages detailed below.

The key objectives of initiative are to:

- ◆ reduce the number of sexual assaults committed by illegal minicabs;
- ◆ raise awareness amongst Londoners and visitors to London of the risks of using illegal minicabs; and
- ◆ reduce the demand for and the availability of illegal minicabs.

To ensure lasting success, it was critical that STaN was developed from the principles of situational crime prevention and that it addressed the situational causes of the problem. The key stakeholders and their partners sought to do this largely by increasing the efforts of offenders through target hardening, increasing the risks for offenders and reducing the rewards by disrupting the illegal minicab market.

The strategy adopted had four main elements that were implemented as part of a coordinated package. These include three demand reduction activities focussed on victims and a supply reduction area focussed on offenders and locations:

- ◆ raising public awareness - informing the public of the dangers of using illegal minicabs;
- ◆ delivery of improved late night travel services;
- ◆ providing the public with enhanced travel information and providing the public with better access to safe travel options; and
- ◆ improve safety through greater regulation of the PHV industry, enforcement and safety measures.

Each element involves a programme of integrated activities that are continually evolving in response to feedback and evaluation.

The success of the STaN is dependent on an effective partnership between three core agencies - TfL, GLA and the MPS who are engaging with organisations across the capital to make London safer at night. The initiative has the support of many bars and nightclubs. This coalition is responsible for the overall development and implementation of the programme. A steering group was

established in 2002 which is chaired by the Mayor of London's Policy Advisor on Women and is attended by senior representatives of the core agencies. The group is accountable for delivering results.

Raising Public Awareness



A central element of STaN is the multi media communications campaign to raise public awareness about the dangers of using illegal minicabs. The aim of the campaign is to persuade the public (women in particular) to choose what they perceive to be a less convenient form of transport at a time when they are least likely to make a rational decision. The primary target audience for the campaign is women aged 16 - 35 going for a night out in London. Analysis of crime data and police intelligence identified that this group was most at risk of attack. The campaign is focussed on hard hitting images and messages to highlight the risks associated with unlicensed minicabs.

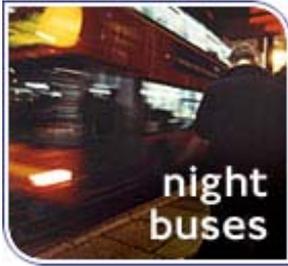
The "Know what you're getting into" campaign was launched in October 2002 as a poster campaign utilising sites on bus shelters and Underground stations across London and at pubs, clubs and other late night venues in central London. The campaign material is regularly updated and continues to be used, with posters and postcards distributed at major London Events and Festivals, to Universities and to late night venues.

The campaign was further strengthened by a chilling cinema and television advertisement that was directed by acclaimed British Director, Mike Leigh. The campaign won two prestigious national advertising awards for successfully alerting women to the dangers of using illegal minicabs. The cinema ad shows a harmless-looking middle-aged man talking to us as he drives. He tells us that he's been in and out of trouble over the years, and how hard it is to get a proper job with a criminal record. A conviction for sexual assault hasn't stopped him from picking up women, though - far from it. We see him stop the car and lean out to talk to a young woman on the pavement - 'minicab love?' he says.

Increasingly electronic media and websites are also being used to target specific audiences (http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/safer_travel/index.jsp)

Delivery of improved late night travel services

A key component of TfL's transport strategy is the promotion of safer travel in the capital at night, and one of the most effective ways of achieving this objective is to encourage the use of night buses and licensed taxis and minicabs.



TfL has provided better late night transport options, including more night buses than ever before. The 100th night bus route was introduced on 3rd June 2006. There are now much easier, safer and more reliable travel options at night. Frequency and capacity improvements of bus services have shortened passengers' waiting times and have increased night bus patronage. Fares have been cut. In 2005 there were 34 million passengers travelling by night bus and this figure continues to rise.

Furthermore, the entire London bus fleet which consists of over 8,000 vehicles has been fitted with CCTV cameras.

TfL introduced changes to the operation of black taxis to encourage greater use of these services. Night tariffs for taxi fares were introduced in order to encourage more licensed taxi drivers to work unsociable hours. Black cabs were also instructed to accept all journeys of up to 12 miles which was double the old limit of six miles.



TfL set up a marshalled taxi rank on Cranbourn Street near Leicester Square tube station in London's West End. The taxi rank is marshalled on Friday and Saturday evenings. Marshals provide a reassuring presence to passengers and co-ordinate taxi travellers with taxi drivers heading to similar destinations. The rank is covered by CCTV and patrolled regularly by police. Marshalled taxi ranks have now been rolled out to various locations across London

and are an important and increasing part of the STaN campaign.

Late night travel was made safer with the launch of the Transport Operational Command Unit (TOCU), a unique partnership between TfL and the MPS, in 2002. With some 1,300 staff including over 400 police and 400 police community support officers the Unit provides a dedicated police capability to focus on reducing crime and the fear of crime on London's bus network, enforcing the law relating to taxis and private hire vehicles and dealing with critical congestion across London. The TOCU has been highly effective in reassuring passengers and staff by providing a visible, uniformed presence across the surface transport network and for the first time provides focussed policing for the bus and cab networks.

Further TfL improvements include the:

- ◆ planned extension to the running hours of the London Underground on Friday and Saturday nights;
- ◆ Dockland Light Railway's (DLR) last mile home initiative has introduced a radical, new car free booking service for Londoners and DLR passengers; and
- ◆ introduction of satellite cab desks in some of London's most popular nightclubs so that customers can book their cabs before leaving the venue.



TfL's Public Carriage Office (PCO) is responsible for licensing the private hire vehicle trade including operators, drivers and vehicles. Since October 2001 as part of a Mayoral driven initiative it has been illegal to operate as a minicab without a licence from the PCO. The PCO has a team of dedicated licensing officers who visit licensed operators to ensure that they and their drivers are complying with regulations. This regulation gives passengers confidence when using a licensed minicab operator that they are dealing with an honest, professional organisation with reliable drivers and safe vehicles.

Driver licensing is regarded as the most important part of this process which is due to be completed later this year. The checks on drivers are rigorous and will certainly make a difference in improving safety. Over 2,260 operators, 40,000 vehicles and 30,000 drivers are currently licensed. All licensed minicabs must show a new distinctive disc fitted to the front and rear windscreens to show that the car is licensed and has met strict safety standards.

The TOCU's dedicated pan-London Cab Enforcement Unit is responsible for enforcing the law relating to taxis and PHVs in London. The Unit has been highly effective in targeting PHV drivers that tout illegally, as well as clamping down on unsafe vehicles and other taxi and private hire offences. The majority of its efforts are focussed towards anti-touting activities at key hotspots in and around central London and developing enforcement expertise and tactics to ensure maximum impact.

The deployment of the TOCU Cab Enforcement Teams is based on intelligence information from a variety of sources including TfL, Project Sapphire, local police, the licensed trade and members of the public. Intelligence sources have identified that the majority of problems with unlicensed minicabs and touting activity are concentrated in the West End. In response, the Cab Enforcement Unit undertakes anti-touting patrols in the West End from Wednesday to Saturday (inclusive) every week of the year. In addition, the Unit carries out many covert operations in central London and other hotspot locations identified by analysis.

Over 2,750 arrests have been made for cab related offences including taxi touting since its introduction in June 2002. The unit has carried hundreds of operations, both overt and covert, to deter and apprehend taxi touts. Tactics have included officers dressed in formal wear exiting from hotels in taxi touting hot spots. The TOCU regularly runs covert operations involving only female officers as these have proved to be more effective in identifying touts and sexual offenders.

The TOCU's remit was recently expanded to include the active investigation of known sexual offender taxi touts. This work will involve targeted sting operations involving female officers. The TOCU Cab Unit team will work closely with Project Sapphire to identify and apprehend sexual predators.

In December 2003, following strong lobbying from the Stan partners taxi touting was made a nationally recordable offence, allowing police to take DNA samples, fingerprints and photographs from all taxi touting offenders. The benefits include tracking persistent offenders, identifying those unlawfully at large, improved opportunities to detect perpetrators of sexual offences, the ability to build offender history at a national level to inform licensing decision making. It was recognised that DNA collected from touts would be a powerful tool in identifying the perpetrators of these crimes and ultimately reduce the number of rapes and sexual assaults. A number of offenders have been identified as part of this process.

TfL and the Mayor of London also raised concerns with the Home office about the inconsistency and leniency of penalties being imposed for taxi touting. The average fines were not high enough to be seen as a deterrent. The maximum fines for touting and the linked offence of no insurance were increased. The inconsistency of penalties continues to be an issue but is being addressed in a variety of ways including magistrate briefings and sentencing guidelines. The TOCU Cab Enforcement Unit sought to redress this issue by organising for all of its cases to be heard by a single court which has been valuable in ensuring that the penalties are both consistent and appropriate for the offence.

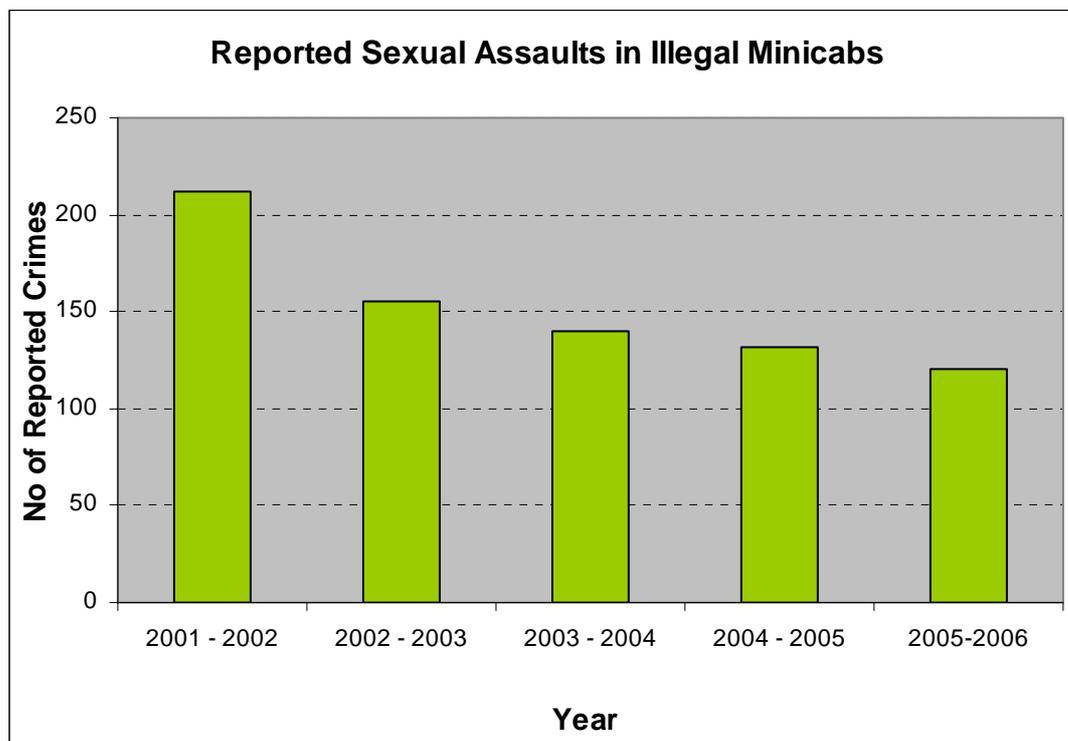
The STaN agencies have been working with bars, clubs and other late night venues to ensure the safety of customers and staff once they have left the premises. The GLA, TfL and the MPS are working with licensing authorities and local authorities to sign up to and follow 'best practice' guidelines. In many cases, door staff are being utilised as place managers to help prevent sexual attacks on women. Door staff are directing patrons to legitimate modes of travel and providing police with valuable intelligence.

EVALUATION

Ongoing evaluation is critical to the success of the STaN initiative. Monitoring of sexual offence crime data, illegal minicab usage and perceptions, enforcement results and taxi touting levels both informs and improves the response to this problem.

STaN has been highly successful in achieving its primary objective that is, reducing the number of sexual assaults by illegal minicab drivers. Sexual assaults in illegal minicabs have fallen each year since the STaN initiative began in 2002. 212 sexual assaults were reported between October 2001 and September 2002. 54 women were raped in these attacks. In the first 12 months of the initiative sexual assaults by illegal minicabs fell by 27% to 155, with rapes falling by 22% to 42. The number of reported attacks fell to 140 the following year; 32 of these were rapes. Project Sapphire has reported that this number has now fallen to ten assaults per month.

Chart 1



TfL commissioned an independent agency to conduct an ongoing programme of research to assess the effectiveness of the initiative. The primary objective of the research is to provide an ongoing market share measure of the night transport marketing the West End and control areas, by determining the share of journeys taken with illegal minicabs. The research is carried out twice a year – prior to and after the media campaign.

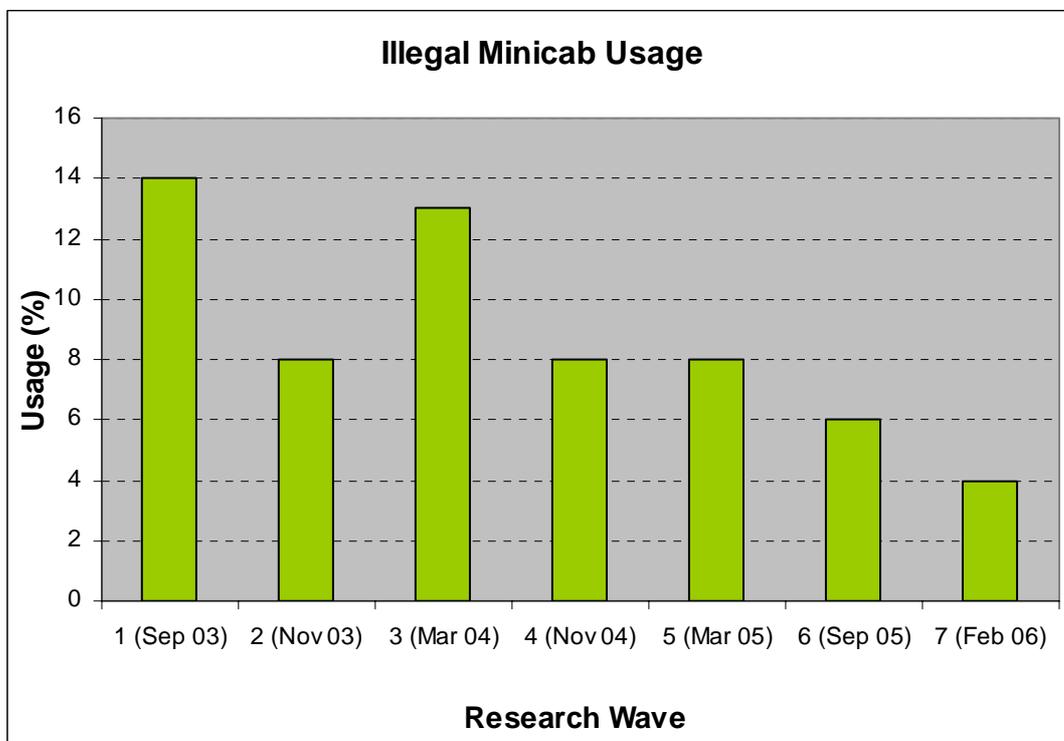
The research provides:

- ◆ a baseline measure of market share prior to the launch of the anti-touting initiatives and further monitors to assess changes over time.

- ◆ explanations for the market share of each transport mode and assesses the extent to which these change over time.
- ◆ feedback on the awareness of the complementary measures such as advertising campaigns and PR activity and assesses their impact on the perceptions of illegal minicabs versus other forms of transport.

Results from the most recent wave of research undertaken in February 2006 (Wave 7) have again highlighted the positive impact of the STaN initiative in the West End. The research has showed that STaN has been successful in changing attitudes to illegal minicab usage. Usage has fallen from 14% in wave 1 (September 2003) to only 4% in wave 7 (see Chart 1). A diffusion of benefits has also seen illegal minicab usage fall from 18% to 11% in areas other than the west end (including specific control areas).

Chart 2



The most welcomed news is that fewer females are making journeys in illegal minicabs. Females were previously more likely to use illegal minicabs than males (18% vs. 10% in wave 1). The proportion of males using this mode of transport over the period has remained steady, but the proportion of females using an illegal minicab has dropped significantly (18% in wave 1 to 7% in wave 7). This demonstrated that the anti-touting initiatives have been most successful with this key demographic group as originally planned. This is also supported by the fact that females had a much worse perception of the safety of illegal minicabs than was the case with males.

Latest results include:

- ◆ In both the West End and the Control areas, the incidence of touting has fallen steadily since the anti-touting initiatives began, and is now significantly lower than in Wave 1.
- ◆ The main reasons for regarding illegal minicabs as the least preferred option relate to safety and risk. Women are significantly more likely than men to choose an illegal minicab as their least preferred choice. The proportions mentioning illegality of minicabs have risen significantly since before the anti-touting initiatives began in both the West End and Control areas.
- ◆ The preferred late night transport modes are the night bus or black cabs.
- ◆ Respondents were also specifically prompted as to whether they had seen any of the “Know What You’re Getting Into” adverts. In total, 59% could recall seeing these adverts – a very high figure for this type of campaign.

A separate piece of independent qualitative research was undertaken in September 2005 to provide a deeper understanding of those ‘hardcore’ users, specifically lone female users. Hardcore users are defined as those who have used an illegal minicab and when told that this is illegal, still remain very likely to use an illegal minicab. This research will be undertaken periodically and any new developments will be used to further tailor the response.

This research forms a valuable part of the ongoing evaluation of the STaN initiatives. The results of this research are used to both inform and improve the response. This has been extremely important in evaluating and tailoring each element of the response to ensure maximum effectiveness.

Research undertaken after the first media campaign highlighted the fact that the marketing campaign needed to be stronger to achieve the desired income. Taking



this into account the campaign was re-launched to include more hard hitting images and a chilling cinema ad. Posters and radio adverts use shock value to remind people that ten women a month are still sexually attacked and raped by illegal minicab drivers in London. Future campaigns will aim to also reach the family and friends of young women to help dissuade them from getting into a car with a taxi tout.

In wave 7, 55% of West End respondents recalled seeing or hearing advertising or communication relating to safer travel at night compared with only 24% in wave 1. In wave 7, 22% of respondents recall advertising messages with stories about attacks / rapes in illegal minicabs compared with 6% in wave 1.

The results from a number of research waves have shown an altered pattern of touting activity and highlighted the increase in ‘passive touting’ which suggests that the touts are aware of how to avoid police detection / arrest. The TOCU reported that after a number of years of active and concentrated enforcement and media exposure of taxi touting persistent hard-core offenders have adapted

their methods to avoid arrest and prosecution. The police have identified that these offenders were beyond reach of the police's covert approaches and police tactics must change in response to changing touting methods. The TOCU Cab Enforcement Strategy has been revised in response to this evaluation of enforcement activity. The apprehension and prosecution of taxi touts will continue to be an integral part of the TOCU / PCO strategy.

Anti-touting initiatives are concentrated in Central London (West End) where the problem is greatest but have been extended to other areas of London. Stan partners are collaborating with Local authorities and BOCUs on STaN initiatives.

STaN Board meetings are held regularly to review the strategy and progress against the annual STaN Action Plan and work plans.

STaN

Safer Travel at Night demonstrates an effective problem solving approach to reducing crime and the opportunities to commit crime. The STaN partners are committed to continuous improvement. The initiative is ongoing and further measures will be implemented to raise awareness, improve travel services, enhance enforcement and provide better information to travellers.

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

TfL is highly committed to tackling and reducing crime and disorder on the transport network. With work co-ordinated through the Transport Policing and Enforcement Directorate (TPED) TfL now commits over £120 million a year to policing services. TPED delivers policing and enforcement services across TfL's operational businesses by funding and working in partnership with the MPS TOCU and the British Transport Police.

TPED applies a problem solving approach based on the principles of SARA and the problem analysis triangle to combat crime and disorder on the transport network. Staff including senior managers, project managers and analysts have received training in problem solving approaches to crime. In addition, staff regularly attend courses and seminars on problem oriented policing / problem solving throughout the UK and the US.

This approach is also adopted by the MPS. The MPS has a dedicated Problem Solving Unit which has identified best practice and designed a simple but effective problem solving process which is compliant with the national Intelligence Model. The MPS Problem Solving Process and Training Programme were recipients of the Tilley Award 2003. The Unit provides coaching, advice and support and has developed a number of guides, templates and checklists for officers. Project Sapphire and the TOCU have an excellent understanding of and experience in problem solving. The SARA process is applied rigorously to STaN.

No problems were encountered with the model.

Many elements of STaN were already funded and the initiative drew these separate funding streams together into a coherent package. Transport for London has provided funding for the provision of services, research, enforcement and marketing costs. A number of private transport providers have also contributed to the initiative.

END NOTES

ⁱ The GLA is a unique form of strategic citywide government for London. It is made up of a directly elected Mayor - the Mayor of London - and a separately elected Assembly - the London Assembly. The GLA's main areas of responsibility include: transport, policing, fire and emergency planning, economic development, planning, culture, environment and health.

ⁱⁱ Transport for London (TfL) is the integrated body responsible for the capital's transport system. Its role is to implement the Mayor's Transport Strategy for London and manage the transport services across the capital for which the Mayor has responsibility. TfL manages London's buses, London Underground, the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) and London Trams. It also runs London River Services, Victoria Coach Station and London's Transport Museum. As well as running the central London congestion charging scheme, TfL manages a 580km network of main roads, all of London's 4,600 traffic lights and regulates taxis and the private hire trade.

ⁱⁱⁱ The MPS is by far the largest of the police services that operate in greater London (the others include the City of London Police and the British Transport Police). Today, the Metropolitan Police Service employs 31,141 officers, 13,661 police staff, 414 traffic wardens and 2,106 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), and covers an area of 620 square miles and a population of 7.2million.

^{iv} The basic street level policing of London is carried out by 33 Borough Operational Command Units (BOCUs).