

REDUCING IMPAIRED DRIVING: A FOCUS ON LOCAL PROGRAMS IN NORTH DAKOTA



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According to the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT 2009), over the past ten years, “DUI arrests in North Dakota have increased more than three-fold and alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes have increased more than five-fold in the same time period.” In 2007, driving under the influence ranked number four in the type of driver citations given due to all types of crash events in North Dakota (NDDOT 2007). In fatal crashes for the same year, DUI was the number one contributor to fatal crashes in North Dakota (NDDOT 2007). From 1998 to 2007, an average of 48.2% of ND fatal crashes were related to alcohol use. In 2007, North Dakota was ranked worse out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia in the percent of fatal crashes involving alcohol (Table 1). When examining fatal crashes involving blood alcohol level (BAC) of at least 0.08 for 2007, North Dakota’s percent of total fatal crashes involving BAC of at least 0.08 was near 50%, while the United States as a whole was scarcely over 30% (Table 1).

Table 1. Top 10 States Fatal Crashes Involving Drivers with Specified BAC as % of TOTAL Fatal Crashes: 2007

Source: FARS data

	USA	12,998	32	15,387	41,059
1	North Dakota	53	48	59	111
2	Delaware	50	43	59	117
3	South Carolina	463	43	520	1,066
4	Wisconsin	313	41	365	756
5	Montana	106	38	124	277
6	Texas	1,292	8	1,485	3,363
7	Louisiana	368	37	435	985
8	Rhode Island	25	36	32	69
9	Connecticut	101	36	119	277
10	Alaska	30	36	35	84

The next section provides a scan of programs currently implemented in North Dakota to decrease impaired driving. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of programs, but rather a brief introduction to well-established and innovative means to deter driving after drinking.

Community Efforts

Senior Center Taxi Program – Valley City, ND

The South Central Senior Center in Valley City, North Dakota launched a city taxi service roughly three years ago. The impetus for the initial taxi service was to provide after hours transportation services to the city of Valley City. The addition of the taxi service extended transportation into the evening hours and beyond, as the taxi service runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The taxi service is advertised in local bars through the use of posters and business cards. According to Pat Hansen, Director of South Central Adult Services in Valley City, approximately 1,000 rides a month are provided by the taxi service and about 70% of those rides occur during the evening hours. Hansen is ‘fairly certain’ that the large number of evening calls is a result of the bar crowd.

Business/Private

Sober Guy Cab Service – Fargo, ND; Grand Forks, ND

Starting in Fargo and recently expanding to Grand Forks, Sober Guy is a cab service with a twist. Sober Guy provides a ride home in addition to a second driver who drives the customer’s vehicle home so that the hassle of getting the vehicle from the bar the next morning is removed. This service is provided for \$17 plus tip. Sober Guy runs Sunday through Thursday from 7pm to 3am and on Fridays and Saturdays from 7pm to 4am (Lord 2008). A caveat to the service is that customers must have car insurance (Bismarck Tribune 2007).

Dezignated Driverz – Grand Forks, ND

Dezignated Driverz (DD) is a business similar to Sober Guy. They provide rides home to customers in addition to driving the customers' vehicles home. DD operates 7 days a week from 7pm to 4am. DD charges a flat fee of \$15 within the city limits of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks and charges an additional \$1 charge for each mile traveled within a 50 mile radius (Schuster 2008). They also require that customers provide proof of insurance coverage. DD has its own website (Dezignated Driverz.com) and is also featured on MySpace. One item of note – the Dezignated Driverz website includes very graphic images related to drinking and driving and impaired driving statistics compared to Sober Guy and Club Express who both downplay the 'serious' side of drinking and driving.

Taxi Voucher Program – Bismarck, ND

McQuade's Distributing, an Anheuser Busch distributing company located in Bismarck, North Dakota, sponsors the Alert Cab program, a taxi voucher program designed to make sure that bar patrons who are too intoxicated to drive arrive home safely. McQuade's Distributing works with the only taxi service in the Bismarck-Mandan area – Taxi 9000. Bars who wish to participate in the program purchase taxi vouchers from McQuade's for \$3-\$4, they then distribute the vouchers, free of charge, to customers they feel are too intoxicated to drive home.

Figure 1. Alert Cab Flier

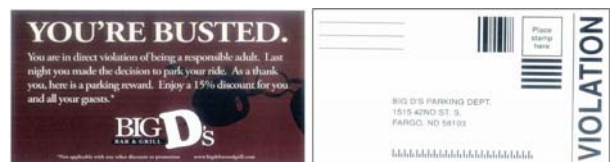


The Alert Cab program historically had been a 'holiday' program however, Shannon McQuade, President of McQuade's distributing, states that the program is now year around (McQuade 2009). McQuade states that they have seen a 25% increase in the use of vouchers since 2007. McQuade admits the program isn't perfect, and there have been some abuses. Some patrons go and drink at one bar, then go next door to get a voucher from another bar. It is because of these abuses that some bars choose not to participate in the program.

Overnight Parking Incentive Program

Big D's, a bar and grill located in Fargo, North Dakota, places incentive cards on customer vehicles that are left in their lot overnight. The card (Figure 2) is placed on any vehicles that are left in the Big D's parking lot after the establishment closes at 3:00am. It offers a 15% discount off their tab during their next visit to Big D's. The card, made to look like a parking ticket on one side, states that the customer is 'busted' for being responsible by leaving their vehicle, with the assumption they were too intoxicated to drive their vehicle home.

Figure 2. Big D's Incentive Card



A recent survey of vehicles parked in local bar lots in early morning hours was conducted. The surveys were all conducted between 7:00am and 7:30am on March 18, 2009; April 8, 2009; and April 15, 2009. On March 18, Big D's had the largest number of vehicles left in their lot (Table 2). However, on the other days the number of vehicles left in Big D's lot was similar to the number of vehicles left at other bars. These observations were taken on Wednesday mornings. It is possible that the number of vehicles left in Big D's lot increases on weekends. However, based solely on this initial survey, it does not appear that Big D's tactic to provide a coupon to customers as an incentive to leave their cars is any more successful than word of mouth at other establishments.

Table 2. Count of Vehicles in Specified Establishment Lots

	Observation Dates		
	March 18, 2009	April 8, 2009	April 15, 2009
Big D's	27	7	7
Chub's Pub	10	4	6
The Hub	14	8	2
Borrowed Bucks	6	2	0

Big D's was the only local 'formal' overnight parking program discovered to allow overnight patron parking. However, in February 2009, bars around Cass County, North Dakota were contacted and asked to participate in a short informal survey regarding overnight parking. A total of 73 establishments were contacted, with 42 participating in the survey: 28 located outside of Fargo and 14 located within Fargo. 92.9% of participating establishments said they allow overnight parking for their patrons, although none advertise this option. Of the establishments that allow overnight parking, all said there was either a 24 hour time limit, or no time limit for the amount of time a vehicle could be parked in their lots.

State Level

North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT)

One of the objectives of the North Dakota Department of Transportation is to reduce alcohol-related fatalities through prevention, education, and enforcement activities (NDDOT 2009). In FY2008, several programs were funded/sponsored by the NDDOT. The NDDOT increased high visibility enforcement during FY2008 to conduct impaired driving enforcement activities including saturation patrols and sobriety checkpoints. In addition, agencies were required to participate in the national **Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.** campaign conducted over several holidays, and were also required to conduct quarterly high visibility enforcement activities scheduled around high-risk community events (NDDOT 2009). Other countermeasures sponsored by the NDDOT include (NDDOT 2009):

- Funding the services of a half-time Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor (TSRP). The TSRP provides training, technical assistance, and resources to court personnel and law enforcement to assure appropriate prosecution and adjudication of DUI cases.
- Providing funds in support of SIDNE (Simulated Impaired Driving Experience) programs conducted by Safe Communities programs for use at schools and other locations to educate drivers and soon-to-be drivers regarding the dangers of impaired driving. SIDNEs are battery-powered vehicles that simulate the effects of impairment from alcohol or other drugs on a motorist's ability to drive.
- Beverage server training. Traffic Safety Office (TSO), branch of the NDDOT, has provided funding to conduct alcohol compliance checks and server training programs in various cities around the state. In addition, the TSO developed a standardized Beverage Server Training curriculum for statewide use by Safe Communities programs and law enforcement.

Colleges/Universities

North Dakota State University (NDSU) – Fargo, ND

In 2007, President Joseph Chapman appointed the President's Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs, which includes faculty, staff, and students at NDSU. The goal of the Council is to reduce the high-risk use of alcohol and drugs that leads to problems for individuals and the community (President's Council on AOD 2009). Several objectives outlined by the plan that deal directly with alcohol use include:

- Publicizing NDSU employer's alcohol and other drug policies to students so they understand the impact a "minor in possession" or a "driving under the influence" charge might have on their future employment possibilities.
- Implementing a requirement for all first-year students to complete a brief alcohol education intervention on-line.
- A media campaign to reinforce positive social norms related to alcohol and other drug use.
- Incentives for students to be involved in developing alcohol-free events.
- Continuous efforts to reach out to students for their input on alcohol and other drug issues.

Another alcohol-related objective regarding impaired driving is to provide information regarding blood alcohol content (BAC) and alcohol poisoning to students utilizing the "Herd Hauler." NDSU partnering with Doyle Cab offers reduced rate rides to anywhere in Fargo, Moorhead, or West Fargo to NDSU students showing a valid student ID (NDSU Student Government).

The Student Government at NDSU is working to incorporate AOD materials with the Herd Hauler program (President's Council on AOD, 2009). In addition, they are exploring ways to create and maintain educational materials for the Herd Hauler, such as placing information in cabs or advertising on other transportation options such as the MAT, they are also looking to partner with a local pizza company to place blood alcohol concentration cards on pizza boxes that are delivered during high drinking weekends. In addition, local bus service is free for NDSU students. However, all bus routes stop running by 10:30pm in Fargo-Moorhead, even on weekends (MAT 2009).

University of North Dakota (UND) – Grand Forks, ND

A student-run group at the University of North Dakota called Adapt provides health-related services including presentations, events and other resources for students (UND 2009). Also, the Adapt website offers an online self-assessment tool called eCheckup To Go (eCHUG). This assessment provides information about personal risk patterns, individual level of alcohol tolerance, unique family risk factors, harm reduction strategies, and helpful resources at UND and in the community.

Similar to NDSU, UND itself provides no after-hours transportation and the city bus service in Grand Forks discontinues service at around 10:00pm, even on weekends. However, a business started by a UND student, Club Express, connects UND students with the downtown bars (Schuster 2008). Club Express runs Friday and Saturday nights and charges \$5 for an all-night pass and \$3 for a one-way trip. As of last February, the business had been averaging 60 riders per night. It runs through the UND school year – begins at the start of the fall semester and ends at the end of the spring semester. The bus service makes scheduled stops on the UND campus and downtown bars. In addition, people can also call ahead and have the bus stop at a house or apartment on campus that is near the route.

Nodak Radio Cab Co, also located in Grand Forks, offers \$1 per-ride taxi service after 5:00pm for UND students who show a valid student ID and obtain a free cab crawler card from UND's student union (Schuster 2008).

Figure 3. Club Express Ad



Summary

While many of the programs and actions at the state level provide an overarching framework for policy, enforcement and education, it was evident in the focus group research (VanWechel 2008) and information gathered here that one size does not fit all when offering alternatives to driving after drinking. Knowledge transfer regarding these alternatives seems a critical element in the overall effort to reduce death and injury caused by impaired drivers.

The goal here was to provide a scan of programs currently implemented in North Dakota to decrease impaired driving. Assessing program success is a potential follow-up to this scan. Defined metrics for what makes these programs successful may include cars left in parking lots, cabs called, and voucher numbers. This type of information could provide valuable impetus to initiate or promote selected programs, and offers an area for future research.

For full references, please contact Andrea Huseth-Zosel—see contact information below.

The content of this report reflects the views of the authors, who are responsible for the facts and accuracy of the information presented. This document is disseminated under the sponsorship of the North Dakota Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

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For more information contact:
Andrea Huseth-Zosel
UGPTI, Fargo, ND 58105
(701) 231-6427
Andrea.Huseth-Zosel@ndsu.edu