

Associated Students of the University of Arizona (ASUA)

ASUA Safe Ride

“Safe Ride Development and Expansion”

Submitted To: The University of Arizona Parents and Family Association

Date: September 27, 2007

UA Foundation Account Number: 02-11010-1103

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Overview

The Associated Students of The University of Arizona (ASUA) Safe Ride has been providing safe, free nighttime transportation to the university community for more than 25 years. Safe Ride's mission is to ensure safe transportation to and from locations in and around campus and to educate students about safety through education and outreach campaigns. All Safe Ride employees are students of The University of Arizona who understand the needs and concerns of students but rely on the generosity of the community to fund the program. Safe Ride transported a record 55,561 passengers during the 2005-2006 academic year. In 2006-2007, Safe Ride transported 53,279 passengers. We believe that the slight decrease is due to the cutbacks in staff and scheduling that occurred last year and a dire need for equipment and system upgrades that have deterred potential users. We are confident that with the adequate resources, we can sufficiently increase effectiveness so that we will have the capability to surpass the current record passenger volume.

Project Abstract

ASUA Safe Ride is seeking a grant to further develop and expand its program. In the past few years Safe Ride has experienced immense growth, but it has come at a significant cost to the overall program. The quality of equipment has degraded and willingness to advocate for student safety has diminished. It appears that, due to our current constraints, a cap has been reached as far as the number of calls and passengers that can be accommodated. Improvements to equipment and systems will undoubtedly increase efficiency and thus the number of students that will be able to utilize the service each night. In addition, the increase in minimum wage last year has placed an immense strain on our budget. Due to the significant additional payroll expenses, we had to cut down on staff and hours and were left with little to no budget for equipment and maintenance, let alone safety and outreach.

Our focus this year is to increase efficiency, thereby allowing us to broaden safety awareness while providing safe transportation for as many students as possible. Internal efforts will include an answering and hold service for the phones, increased phone line capacity, establishing potential funding sources, and additional vehicles. External efforts will consist of the continuation of the education and outreach campaign by increasing safety awareness through publications in the Daily Wildcat, updating the website, stocking pepper spray for concerned students, and providing key chains.

Program Description

Internal Efforts

Safe Ride has seen enormous growth during the past five years. Passenger usage has grown from 19,411 passengers in the 2001-2002 academic year to a record 55,561 passengers in 2005-2006. The Campus Climate Survey conducted by the Dean of Students Office found that the percentage of students who use Safe Ride has risen from 16% in 2001 to 21% in 2006. Safe Ride has struggled to meet this increase in student demand and the dramatic influx has resulted in a lower quality of overall service. The proposed upgrades would allow us to increase the quality of service as well as provide transportation to the many students who would like to but are currently unable to use our service due to capacity constraints.

Answering and Hold Service

One of the major operational challenges Safe Ride faces is a direct result of inefficiency with our phone system in the office. With the current system, the one person working in the office must answer phones to put callers on hold, take calls, enter locations into the computer, and dispatch drivers all at the same time. A great portion of time is wasted picking up the phone to place callers on hold. Oftentimes important communication over the radio can be missed during this time and must be repeated. While callers are on

hold they only hear silence, and many, believing they have been hung up on, will hang up and call back. This creates more work for the dispatcher to place these calls on hold and deal with possibly frustrated or angry callers. Also, once the dispatcher takes a call, many callers do not understand the basic function of Safe Ride and waste the dispatcher's time by responding slowly or giving unnecessary information. If every caller understood our policies on group size, calling ahead, and boundaries, for example, it would save dispatchers a significant amount of time each night. With the time saved, more calls could be answered and more time could be spent listening to the drivers on the radios, which would make dispatching far more efficient.

In order to address these problems, we will use the proposed grant money to purchase an answering and hold system. This service would automatically answer phone calls with a previously recorded message letting callers know important information, including: an operator will be with you in a few minutes, calls are answered in the order they are received, do not hang up, if this is an emergency, hang up and dial 911 or 621-UAPD, etc. After this introductory message, the recording would brief callers on what information to have prepared for the dispatcher: current location, drop off location, and number of people, as well as the guidelines regarding boundaries, group size, etc. This way, when dispatchers answer the call, the caller will save time by being prepared to give only the necessary information in the most efficient format. Also, the recorded message will let callers know that they are still on the line which will prevent them from hanging up and calling back unnecessarily. These features will allow the dispatcher to become exponentially more effective in the office, in turn enabling Safe Ride to cater to more passengers and offer callers a clearer, more streamlined process.

Phone Lines

Probably the single most common complaint among students, another significant constraint on Safe Ride is that we currently have only four phone lines. When the four phone lines are full, new callers hear the same automated message that plays when we are closed and must keep calling until they happen to reach an operator and get placed on hold. All four lines are in use for the vast majority of each shift every night, which signifies that there are students who need rides who cannot get through. Thus to better serve students in need of safe transportation, Safe Ride must have more than four phone lines available to callers. In the past this hasn't been a viable option because of the strain it would put on supervisors who would have to answer the additional calls and place them on hold; however, in conjunction with the answering and hold service, these phone lines would simply allow more students to reach Safe Ride and receive rides without increasing the strain on dispatchers.

Potential Funding Sources

Another attractive feature of the answering and hold service is the ability to record music or announcements that would play for callers on hold. This aspect of the software would be a great asset not just to Safe Ride, but also to ASUA, which could partner with Safe Ride to use this hold time to announce and/or advertise upcoming events such as Spring Fling or concerts. In addition, this feature provides an exciting potential source of funding. On our busiest nights, callers are generally on hold for about five minutes. In this time they could hear the essential Safe Ride information, announcements from ASUA, as well as paid commercials from local businesses. With data regarding average hold time and number of callers per night, we can approach businesses that have customer bases consisting mainly of UA students and sell advertising spots on our hold system. We anticipate that we would be able to get significant funding from locations such as the UA Bookstore and businesses on University Blvd. who would be interested in buying advertising spots on our hold service. This would not only help to expand the budget for Safe Ride and benefit the program overall, but also help to integrate Safe Ride with the surrounding community while increasing awareness of the program and safety issues on campus.

Additional Vehicles

Current equipment is outdated and starting to fail on a regular basis. Necessary upgrades, like new vehicles and technology, have been neglected because resources could not be allocated away from the direct costs of running the transportation service, especially with the minimum wage increase. The vehicle maintenance budget grows each year as the cars get older. One of our vehicles in particular has cost us more to repair and maintain in the last year than the vehicle itself is worth. We need to replace this vehicle with another five passenger sedan and also expand the fleet with a second minivan. In the past, two minivans have proved extremely valuable to the service because of their higher passenger capacity. Thus adding a second minivan to the fleet, thereby allowing an additional driver for each shift, is one of our top priorities for this year.

External Efforts

The second part of the proposed development and expansion plan is the continuation of an outreach campaign, designed to increase safety awareness throughout the entire community. Safe Ride provides a great service by giving students safe night time transportation, but safety goes beyond simply offering rides. According to the Campus Climate Survey, 40% of students still do not feel safe on campus after dark and 54% do not feel safe off campus after dark. Despite our record numbers, the majority of students still do not feel safe. Safe Ride needs to become an advocate for student safety, regardless of time of day, empowering students with the tools to keep themselves safe.

Daily Wildcat

Many students do not understand Safe Ride's goals, and try to use the service improperly, making it difficult to serve the students that actually need safe transportation. By increasing marketing and outreach to students Safe Ride hopes to increase awareness. The Daily Wildcat is read by more than 15,000 students every day, making it the most practical avenue for reaching a large number of students. We are hoping to begin this effort by having a news story written on Safe Ride to inform students, especially those new to campus, of the service and how it is properly utilized. In addition, with the help of this grant, Safe Ride will begin publishing a biweekly safety column aimed at educating students on campus safety and the best way to stay safe (see example at end of proposal). This column will consist of safety statistics that will be compiled by Safe Ride, UAPD and the Dean of Students Office. It will also contain simple tips that students can use to remain safe on campus. These tips, in addition to more detailed safety information, will also be available on the Safe Ride website for students to access.

SAFE RIDE
SAFETY IN ACTION

WEEKLY SAFETY TIP
saferide.arizona.edu

Traveling at Night

When traveling at night, do not travel alone unless you absolutely have to. Find a friend to go with you or call Safe Ride. Be sure to wear light colored clothing so drivers can see you. Walk in well lit areas whenever possible. Be sure to have a cell phone with you in case of emergencies. If you see anything suspicious, call 911. Don't let yourself become a victim.

Did You Know?
61% of crimes happen after 6PM

Brought to you by the UA Parents & Family Association

Possible appearance of Daily Wildcat Safety Tips

Safe Ride Website

Another step in increasing marketing and outreach is a reconstruction of the Safe Ride website. By making the website more informative students can easily understand how we serve the community. Flyers and pamphlets will be printed and distributed to campus organizations such as Residence Life and The Dean of Students Office at significant points during the year to attract people to the website.

Pepper Spray

Safe Ride is only known by students for giving free rides. We have never had a strong presence on campus, and the outreach program was designed to change that for good. Last year Safe Ride began its efforts towards this goal by holding events on the mall to increase safety awareness. A popular aspect of these events was free pepper spray that we provided mainly to females who did not have any and felt it would make them feel safer. In addition, drivers began carrying pepper spray with them in the cars and offered it to passengers who raised concerns about their safety on campus, especially at the start of the school year and after safety incidents were reported on campus. This was a very popular practice, and it has been requested by passengers since we ran out of pepper spray. We think that this is an effective way to help students feel safer on campus, and it helps to make students more aware of Safe Ride while fulfilling our mission. With a portion of the proposed grant we will maintain a stock of pepper spray that will be available to students who express a need.

Key Chains

In the past, key chains have been a very effective way of informing students of our service. We plan on using a portion of this grant to purchase new, more informative key chains for distribution at campus safety events on the mall. These key chains would include information regarding our hours, phone number, and boundaries, as well as the number for UAPD in the case where we can not be reached. By offering aesthetically pleasing and informative key chains to students, it is more likely that they will use them as well as our service. We can also distribute key chains along with the pepper spray so that both can be added to students' key rings.

Budget

Item	Quantity	Price	Total
Answering Service & Installation	1	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00
Additional Phone Lines	4	\$15.00/month	\$720.00
Seven Passenger Minivan	1	\$7,500.00	\$7,500.00
Fuel for Additional Minivan	35	\$125.00/week	\$4,375.00
Driver for Additional Minivan (4 nights/week)	35	\$189.00/week	\$6,615.00
Five Passenger Sedan	1	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Pepper Spray	500	\$2.00	\$1,000.00
Key chains	500	\$0.50	\$250.00
Wildcat Safety Tips	15	\$140.00	\$2,100.00
Grand Total			\$28,760.00

Measurable Outcomes

Success will be measured based on the number of rides given and the quality of service delivered to the community. Quantitative data is kept each night and this is how Safe Ride will track its progress throughout the year. The number of rides given, average response time and cost per ride will serve as an indicator of how well resources have been allocated. Safe Ride will conduct a survey of passengers to measure satisfaction and take suggestions each semester in order to understand user needs and concerns. These surveys can be used to measure satisfaction before and after improvements are made. Changes will be recorded with each improvement to show the impact on the service and the entire student community.