



## **Alternative Transportation Reduces Driving Under the Influence**

### **Overview**

In 2007, 33.8 percent of fatal crashes in Wyoming involved alcohol, resulting in 49 fatalities. Overall, 83 percent of crashes in Wyoming involved alcohol. When individuals drink alcohol and have no alternative to driving their own vehicle home, they are more likely to drive while impaired. When alternative transportation is available, people may be more likely to avoid driving while impaired.

### **Problem/Issue**

Given the extent and complexity of the impaired driving issue, a full range of countermeasures is needed to make progress in reducing driving under the influence (DUI). In Wyoming, public transit is not widely available, and when individuals drink alcohol many have no transportation options other than driving. DUI is a major factor in Wyoming traffic crashes, resulting in loss of life and serious injury, often to innocent victims in other vehicles.

### **Understanding the Strategy**

When alternative transportation options are available, people under the influence may be more likely to use them and avoid operating a vehicle while impaired. Alternative transportation services transport drinkers home from -- and sometimes to and between -- drinking establishments using taxis, privately owned vehicles, buses, tow trucks, and law enforcement agents. When services have specific characteristics such as accessibility, availability, and ease of integration into activity, they have the greatest likelihood of encouraging drivers to choose an alternative transportation rather than driving after drinking. The most effective AT programs are likely to be those that provide the greatest coverage of times, geography, individuals, and which involve the fewest practical barriers to their use, consequently achieving maximum ridership among individuals who would otherwise drive while impaired.

Successful programs have been initiated in some communities in Wyoming. For example, the Tippy Taxi program in Casper was initiated during the 2008 holiday season and in 2010 has been extended to year-round service. Vouchers for Tippy Taxi's free rides home are available through liquor serving establishments and the taxi companies. While the Tippy Taxi program is currently funded through a variety of sources, ensuring consistent sources of funding for year-round alternative transportation programs is often a challenge.

To be able to provide year-round service for alternative transportation in larger number of communities in Wyoming, a sustained funding source is needed. One option is to assess a fee as part of each DUI arrest, which would be dedicated to a statewide alternative transportation fund. Funds could be used to support ongoing alternative transportation programs in a larger number of communities.

### **How This Strategy Addresses the Problem**

By securing a sustained statewide funding source for alternative transportation programs, a wider range of communities could be served by programs similar to Topsy Taxi, which has already proven successful in Casper. Sustained funding is critical because the availability of comprehensive service year-round is an important factor to encourage its use.

### **Conclusion**

Establishing sustained funding for alternative transportation services in Wyoming will enable services to serve a larger number of communities on an ongoing basis, and has the potential to reduce the huge safety and cost burden resulting from DUI.

### **Resources**

Alternative Transportation Programs: A Countermeasure for Reducing Impaired Driving, NHTSA, September 2009.

Evaluation of Alcohol Factors in Custodial Arrests in the State of Wyoming, Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police, 2008.