SAFE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: THE ROAD SAFETY BENEFITS
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INTRODUCTION
Youthsafe's investigations into safer celebrating identified the need for Safe and Accessible Transport as a key priority for young people, particularly for night travel. Alternative transport has also been commonly suggested, by community and professionals, as a key strategy to address adult and young driver road injury risks. Safe alternative transport (SAT) schemes have the potential to address a number of road injury issues, such as drink walking, risky night-time driving, drink and drug driving and fatigue. Road safety authorities have also identified alternative transport as a key countermeasure in addressing road traffic injuries for the general population as well as young drivers (Mohan, Tiwari, Khayesi & Nafukho, 2006; Peden et al, 2004). Although empirical research into the effectiveness, impact and benefits of alternative transport schemes is scarce, there are numerous anecdotal reports in the media and via the Internet suggesting benefits such as reductions in alcohol related traffic crashes and incidents of drink driving and other driving offences. An evaluation of a SAT scheme was conducted to explore a range of issues which included the road safety benefits.

METHODS
Survey and interview methods were used to obtain data from users and non-users of the SAT scheme. Scheme users and non-users were invited to participate in the survey on a main street in the CBD of the respective local area at one of the two pickup locations. One hundred participants voluntarily completed a survey; 72 were either first time or previous users of the service and 28 had never used the service and were not intending to use the service on the night of data collection. Participants were aged between 18 and 34 years; however 83% (83 participants) were aged 18 to 20 years. Sixty-one participants were male and 39 were female.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
A range of important results were identified from this evaluation study about planning and preparedness of people around transport home and road safety benefits related to a SAT scheme. Road safety benefits were examined in this evaluation by asking SAT scheme users to report on how the SAT scheme’s availability had assisted them avoid breaking the passenger restriction law, drink driving and/or getting a lift with a driver who had been drinking in order to travel home. Participants were given the response option ‘not applicable’ to choose if they ordinarily would not undertake any of these behaviours.

Only 55% of users had actually planning to use the bus to get home that night. When these results were analysed by gender it was male users who were more likely to have made plans to use the SAT scheme to travel home.

Results indicated that the SAT scheme being available had helped 57.1% of female and 56.8% of male participants avoid breaking the passenger restriction laws in order to get home. Furthermore, almost three-quarters of male (70.3%) and female (71.4%) participants indicated that the SAT scheme had helped them avoid drink driving to get home from their social activities. Similarly, high percentages of participants reported avoidance of getting a lift with a drunk driver, the results indicating that the SAT scheme being available had helped 77.3% of males and 71.4% of females avoid getting a lift home with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.

CONCLUSIONS
The results presented above are significant findings that have major implications for road safety. These results suggest that the availability of SAT schemes for night travel encourages people to choose safer alternative transport to travel home at night from social activities as opposed to choosing risky transport options such as drink driving and getting a lift with a drunk driver. Further rigorous research needs to be conducted to investigate these findings.

REFERENCES