

Community Safe Speed Promise: A joint initiative between the Cities of Joondalup and Stirling

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Abstract

The City of Joondalup and the City of Stirling received a Community Road Safety Grant in December 2008 to fund the 'Community Safe Speed Promise' initiative. The initiative was established from a former initiative known as the 'Neighbourhood Pace Car Pledge' developed by David Engwicht. The initiative asks residents to sign a 'Community Safe Speed Promise' and commit to driving within the speed limit. Participants receive a bumper sticker and fridge magnet so they are easily identifiable and can set an example for other motorists. The aim of the initiative is to reduce the average travel speeds in the City of Joondalup and the City of Stirling. Results collected through a pre- and post-questionnaire showed that participants appeared to be older (aged over 55 years) and already recognised speeding as an issue in society. People who are actually speeding and people from other age groups are not joining the initiative. As a result, the goal of the initiative was not achieved. It is recommended that the ways to improve engagement of different groups in community road safety initiatives would be worthwhile to investigating.

Keywords

Speeding, speed, participation, community

Introduction

Speeding is a major concern for the City of Joondalup and the City of Stirling. Of the 1019 roads assessed in the last 5 years in the City of Stirling, approximately 23% of these roads recorded an 85th percentile speed over 60km/h. This includes an unacceptable number of 50km/h roads recording an 85th percentile speed over 65km/h. This was not dissimilar to the City of Joondalup which continuously receives numerous complaints about speeding on local roads and petitions from residents requesting traffic treatments to be installed to reduce these incidences. Local statistics from the City of Joondalup have also shown during the five year period from 2004 to 2008 there was a total of 11,247 crash records which caused 22 fatalities (1). This was the reason for the development and implementation of the 'Community Safe Speed Promise' initiative.

The 'Community Safe Speed Promise' is based on an initiative known as the 'Neighbourhood Pace Car Pledge' initiative. The 'Neighbourhood Pace Car Pledge' was founded by David Engwicht, who developed the initiative when he realised how his car use was impacting on the neighbourhoods through which he drove. He initially worked with a community in Boise, Idaho in the United States to conceive the idea. Within four days, 200 residents of Boise had signed the pledge ready for a media launch of the initiative (2). Similar initiatives like these have been developed in other states in the United States.

Based on the existing program by David Engwicht, the City of Stirling implemented a similar initiative in March 2005. The City of Stirling's 'Neighbourhood Pace Car Pledge' initiative was promoted through the newspapers, website, displays at libraries and shopping centres, brochures at community centres, City newsletters, direct mail to complainants, and a competition as an extra incentive to recruit participants. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services signed the 'Neighbourhood Pace Car Pledge' on 2 April 2007 and a story about this appeared on Channel 10 news.

Evaluation of the initiative was completed in March 2006 through the 'Neighbourhood Pace Car Evaluation Survey' (3). These results showed that:

- Of all the respondents, 80% felt that as a result of becoming a Neighbourhood Pace Car Driver that they have been able to improve the environment that they live in.
- All survey respondents believed being involved in the initiative made them more aware of the speeds at which they are travelling.

Although the City of Stirling 'Neighbourhood Pace Car Initiative' had achieved success there was more than could be undertaken to improve the success of this initiative.

During 2007, Officers from the Cities of Stirling, Joondalup and Melville discussed with the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) - RoadWise Road Safety Officer (Metropolitan North) how the Neighbourhood Pace Car Pledge initiative could be improved. It was determined that the term 'Pace Car' was too ambiguous and likely to cause misconceptions as to what the initiative is about. As a result, several concepts were brainstormed until the term 'Community Safe Speed Promise' was decided upon. The key aspects which were prioritised as being of importance were:

- Improving the communication plan of the initiative by including a highly extensive media campaign, and
- Increasing the validity and reliability of the evaluation results by using a rigorous evaluation instrument. This included measuring norms, attitudes and habits of speeding behaviour to gauge the success.

The Cities of Joondalup and Stirling then entered into a partnership agreement to jointly run the 'Community Safe Speed Promise' initiative. A grant application was submitted to the WALGA RoadWise program's 'Community Road Safety Grants Program' which was successful in December 2008.

The initiative asks residents to sign a 'Community Safe Speed Promise' and commit to driving within the speed limit and being a courteous driver. Committed drivers are provided with a bumper sticker and fridge magnet so they are easily identifiable and can set an example for other motorists to follow. When 'Community Safe Speed Promise' drivers slow down, they reduce the impact of their car use on the communities they drive through and encourage following cars to observe the speed limits. Having a small percentage of vehicles driving the speed limit city-wide is expected to start a positive cycle. The Community Safe Speed Promise provides an alternative and cost-effective approach to reducing travel speeds on local roads, without installing traditional traffic calming measures.

Theoretical Framework

The 'Community Safe Speed Promise' can be linked to the Cognitive Dissonance Theory. This theory proposes that individuals have a need for coherence in their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. If an inconsistency exists between a person's beliefs and behaviour then this creates a feeling of imbalance, which is psychologically uncomfortable, motivating the person to change their attitude or behaviour to regain balance (4). By making the commitment by signing the 'Community Safe Speed Promise' and placing a sticker on their vehicle, a person is choosing to commit to driving within the speed limit. Driving above the speed limit therefore becomes inconsistent to their beliefs and attitudes, and the individual may be persuaded by the need for consistency to drive at or below the speed limit. Use of this theory has enabled the initiative to be planned, implemented and evaluated in a logical theory based approach and has improved the chances of success (5).

Methods

Goal

To decrease the average travel speeds in the City of Stirling and the City of Joondalup.

Objective

To reduce the social acceptability of driving over the posted speed limit.

Activities

In March 2009, the initiative was launched to the community by the City of Joondalup Mayor and Deputy President WALGA; Mr Troy Pickard, the City of Stirling Mayor; Mr David Boothman, Mr Howard Sattler (6PR radio) and Councillor Bill Mitchell (President, WALGA). Also in attendance at this launch

were Mr Iain Cameron (Executive Director, Office of Road Safety), Mr Vick Evans (CEO, Constable Care), Ms Deborah Costello (CEO, Injury Control Council WA) and the WA Police (Mirrabooka Traffic, Warwick Traffic & North West Metro Crime Prevention & Diversity Unit). The launch of the initiative was featured in the Joondalup Times community newspaper on 7 April 2009.

The 'Community Safe Speed Promise' has been promoted through various communication channels. This includes advertising in the Stirling Times and Joondalup Times community newspapers and a radio advertising campaign on 6PR for six weeks. Local businesses and community ratepayer/resident association groups have also been contacted for their support. Both of the Cities have placed the initiative information onto their website and have created online forms for people to sign-up electronically. The Cities have distributed the initiative brochures to libraries, community recreation/leisure centres and halls to improve accessibility to the initiative. The Cities have also developed a referral initiative which asks residents to suggest people to sign-up and win a prize. In addition, both Cities have run competitions with the community at libraries, at schools and in the office for staff to encourage further participation in the initiative.

The City of Joondalup has a prompt on their 'messages on hold' system about the initiative. Distribution to schools in the City of Joondalup has been completed through the Constable Care initiative and through school P&C groups. The initiative has been promoted through various displays and expos including the Joondalup Festival, a three week display at Craigie Leisure Centre, at senior's events and Edith Cowan University Open Day (Joondalup Campus July 2009). The City of Joondalup Road Safety Officer completed an interview in May 2009 on Twin Cities FM radio station to promote the initiative.

The City of Stirling has promoted the initiative at the Osborne Park Fair and at a Nollamara Shopping Centre display along with promotion through the City of Stirling's external publications; the *Stirling Scoop* and the *Stirling Scene*. Concerned local volunteers have hand delivered over 1000 brochures along their streets after hearing about the initiative through various communication mediums.

The initiative has featured in the WALGA RoadWise program's 'Regional Round-Up' newsletter, the Australian Health Promotion Association (WA Branch's) quarterly newsletter and the School Drug Education and RoadAware's newsletter.

Evaluation design

There are two phases to the evaluation of this initiative. The first phase evaluated the participant's social acceptability towards speeding through using a pre-test and post-test design. This type of design is particularly beneficial for measuring the actual impact of the initiative on the community as it provides baseline data for comparison (6).

Data analysis

The responses to the pre-questionnaire were entered into Microsoft Excel for analysis. The data was presented using descriptive statistics (frequencies).

Results

The pre-evaluation results provided initial baseline data for comparison with the post-evaluation.

i) Response rate

There were 422 participants in the initiative at the City of Stirling and 511 participants at the City of Joondalup. There were 157 (37.2%) respondents who completed the pre-questionnaire at the City of Stirling and 156 (30.5%) respondents who completed the pre-questionnaire at the City of Joondalup. For the post-questionnaire 198 (46.9%) responded at the City of Stirling and 180 (35%) responded at the City of Joondalup.

ii) Age characteristics

The majority of the respondents in both City of Stirling and City of Joondalup were over 55 years old. In the pre-questionnaire this was 61.8% for the City of Stirling and 41% of the City of Joondalup and the post-questionnaire 58.1% for the City of Stirling and 48.9% for the City of Joondalup.

iii) Reasons for participation

Respondents were asked why they joined the initiative. Responses were coded into common themes. The main reasons why City of Joondalup and City of Stirling participants joined the initiative were because they were ‘annoyed and concerned about speeding’ in their street, so that they could be ‘reminded as they drive’ to keep to the speed limit, so they could ‘act as role models to other drivers’ and so they could ‘contribute to improving road safety’.

iv) Method of sign-up

The way in which participants signed up to the initiative was recorded. This is summarised in the table below. The majority of participants signed up through the competitions held in the libraries.

Table 1: Method of participant signup

Source	City of Joondalup	City of Stirling
Competition in Library	300 (58.7%)	111 (26%)
Newspaper Advertisements	47 (9.1%)	54 (12.8%)
Events	60 (12.9%)	N/A
Brochures	23 (4.5%)	91 (21.5%)
Staff Competition	N/A	94 (22%)
Online	21 (4.1%)	48(11.4%)
Launch	19 (3.7%)	24 (5.7%)
School distributions	24 (4.7%)	N/A
Other	11 (2.1%)	N/A

v) Perceptions towards awareness of speeding and community improvements

In the post-questionnaire participants were asked whether their participation in the initiative had raised their awareness of the speeds at which they were travelling. The majority of participants from the City of Stirling (74.7%) and the City of Joondalup (66.1%) believed the initiative had contributed to increased awareness of their speeds.

vi) Perceptions towards speeding

To assess the participants’ attitudes, norms, habits and intentions towards speeding, participants were asked to respond to statements about speeding/speed limits on a five point likert scale from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Only certain statements have been used in this paper (four out of 13). The results have shown the following responses to four of the 13 statements:

Speeding is one of the least important problems

In the pre-questionnaire the majority of the respondents at City of Stirling (68.2%) and the City of Joondalup (60%) *strongly disagreed* with this statement. In the post-questionnaire, this was similar with more than half of respondents *strongly disagreeing* or *disagreeing* with this

statement. In the City of Stirling 43.4% *strongly disagreed* and 28.8% *disagreed* and in the City of Joondalup 48.9% *strongly disagreed* and 31.1% *disagreed* with the statement.

Passengers find I never exceed the speed limit by more than 5km/hr

In the pre-questionnaire, the majority of respondents at the City of Stirling either *strongly agreed* (45.5%) or *agreed* (36.4%) with this statement. Similar results were found at the City of Joondalup with 43% of respondents who *strongly agreed* and 33% who *agreed* with this statement. In the post-questionnaire, the results were similar. In the City of Stirling 39.9% *strongly agreed* and 39.9% *agreed* and in the City of Joondalup 36.7% *strongly agreed* and 37.2% *agreed* with this statement.

I have a strong personal obligation to drive at the speed limit

In the pre-questionnaire, the majority of respondents at the City of Stirling (74.2%) and at the City of Joondalup (70%) *strongly agreed* with this statement. In the post-questionnaire, the results were slightly different with the majority of respondents either *strongly agreeing* or *agreeing*. In the City of Stirling 49.5% *strongly agreed* and 29.3% *agreed* and in the City of Joondalup 48.9% *strongly agreed* and 36.7% *agreed*.

It is unacceptable to exceed the speed limit

In the pre-questionnaire, just over half of respondents *strongly agreed* with this statement at the City of Stirling (57.6%) and the City of Joondalup (56.7%). In the post-questionnaire, the results showed respondents either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with this statement. In the City of Stirling 37.9% *strongly agreed* and 35.4% *agreed* and in the City of Joondalup 34.4% *strongly agreed* and 45.6% *agreed*.

vii) Initiative continuation

In the post-questionnaire participants were asked whether they would like the initiative to continue. The majority of respondents from the City of Stirling (72.7%) and the City of Joondalup (71.1%) would like the initiative to continue.

viii) Initiative improvements

In the post-questionnaire participants were asked how the initiative could be improved. The majority of respondents believed the initiative should be promoted and advertised more to the community. There was a general consensus that the program did not reach enough people in the community.

Discussion

The Community Safe Speed Promise appears to be encouraging mainly people aged 55 years and older to participate in the initiative.

The reasons for joining the initiative were similar for the respondents in the City of Joondalup and City of Stirling. Respondents joined the initiative mainly because they were concerned and annoyed about speeding and wanted to be role models for other drivers. Other respondents joined the initiative because they thought it would improve road safety and that the sticker would remind them as they drove to drive within the speed limit. This suggests that participants in the initiative are those who are concerned about speeding.

The main way in which respondents signed up to the initiative for both City of Joondalup and City of Stirling was through the competitions held in the libraries and leisure centres. This suggests incentives are important for individuals to participate.

The respondent's perceptions towards speeding based on the four statements selected for this paper appeared to be similar between pre- and post-questionnaire. The majority of respondents for both Cities

agreed/strongly agreed with the statements: ‘*Passengers find I never exceed the speed limit by >5km/h*’, ‘*I have a strong personal obligation to drive at the speed limit*’ and ‘*It is unacceptable to exceed the speed limit*’. The majority of respondents for both Cities *disagreed/strongly disagreed* with the statements ‘*Speeding is one of the least important problems*’. The results indicated that those participating in the initiative already believed speeding was a priority issue and perceived that they drove within the speed limit. This suggests that people who sign-up to the initiative are people already concerned about speeding. This can be viewed positively, suggesting that individuals within the community are genuinely concerned with speeding and therefore believe the initiative can make a difference by participating.

The results were limited due to the smaller response rates collected by both City of Joondalup and City of Stirling. Due to the smaller response rates the results may not be representative of the range of participants in the initiative and therefore conclusions are limited.

There are also limitations for the City of Joondalup alone. The City of Stirling community have been exposed to the previous ‘Neighbourhood Pace Car Initiative’ since 2005 which provides an advantage. Whereas, the City of Joondalup community members are still being introduced to road safety initiatives which began in 2008.

Conclusion

The Community Safe Speed Promise initiative is a joint initiative run by the City of Joondalup and the City of Stirling. The initiative aimed to ‘reduce the average travel speeds in the City of Stirling and the City of Joondalup’. The objective of this initiative was ‘to reduce the social acceptability of driving over the posted speed limit’.

The results from the evaluation showed that the initiative appeared to attract participants aged 55 and over, who already viewed speeding as a concern and perceived themselves to drive within the speed limit. The positive side to this is that there are people in our community who genuinely perceived speeding to be an issue and believed joining the initiative will make a difference. However, this means that people who are actually speeding and people from other age groups are not joining the initiative. As a result, the goal and objective of the initiative were not achieved.

The majority of respondents thought the initiative should continue in the long term. However, the initiative is not cost-effective in the long term and requires extensive human resources to keep participants interested. The future of the initiative will be determined separately by the City of Stirling and City of Joondalup.

Recommendations

This project has contributed to the body of research on how the community responds to community road safety initiatives. More research is encouraged in this area to enable higher quality community road safety initiatives to be implemented.

An investigation into the barriers and enablers for participation in the ‘Community Safe Speed Promise’ initiative may be necessary. This would assist in improving the implementation of the initiative such as providing ways to engage certain groups through specific methods. In addition, this type of research would also be of assistance in improving the other road safety initiatives run by the City of Stirling and the City of Joondalup.

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