



Kan-go trial underway



A world first roaming bus service commenced in Toowoomba in June 2005. Kan-go is a trial service attempting to provide increased flexibility, greater access and safety on public transport

KAN-GO WILL pick up passengers from their homes and drop them back to their door or as close as possible if the bus cannot access a particular street. If prospective passengers live in an inaccessible street then they will be directed to a designated pick up point in the roam zone.

The service is operated by Toowoomba Sunbus using a wheelchair accessible Mercedes midi-bus. It will operate the same fixed route as the current route 3 service that runs from Toowoomba City to the Range Shop via the hospital. Passengers who travel on this special service between the City and Range Shop do not need to book, just use the service as a

normal route 3. Once at the Range Shop the bus will then travel into the roam zone in the Rangeville area.

The service is planned to operate every hour from 0745 to 1745 on weekdays and from 0945 to 1345 on Saturdays. This trial is now providing services at times when there were none previously. Normal bus fares and concessions apply.

Whilst there are many services of this type (home pick up) in existence this operation differs in the fact that the bus is connected to a GPS supported booking system. Bookings for the service are transmitted through the Black & White Taxi call centre.



"... the bus is connected to a GPS supported booking system."

Passengers register by calling a toll free number and their details are logged into the system. The driver is then sent the details via the satnav system. The best route is then plotted by the system. Once in the system the bookings are prioritised.

Then all the driver has to do is activate the system and the course to the next pickup is displayed on his monitor. Additionally a series of precise directions is given audibly to the driver advising him when to turn, which direction, and how far to the pickup. If the driver takes a wrong turn or is forced to deviate because of a traffic situation the system automatically recalculates the optimum route to the pickup.

The area of the roam zone was chosen because of its high percentage of nursing homes and elderly residents, who need to get to the local shopping centres, doctors and hospitals. Currently they do not have the resources to use more expensive means of transport as often as they would like. Kan-go will provide them with this travel option.

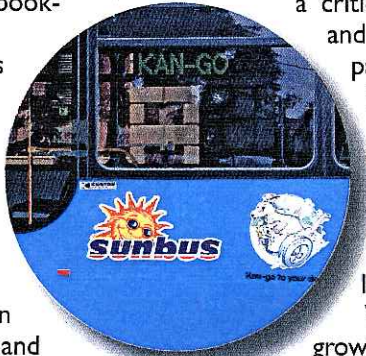
Queensland Transport and Raywood Solutions especially developed the software for this system.

A demonstration of the operation was carried out. The service travelled to the Range Shop and then picked up three trial passengers. In each case the bus was directed by the system to the pickup points by the onboard system, with a

reassuring 'you are at your destination' level with the intending passenger.

As with any service of this type its success principally depends on the drivers selected for the service. They are a critical part of the operation and their customer skills and patience must be of the highest order. Garden City Sunbus has chosen two drivers to be the regulars on this service. Exceptions service skills, empathy and patience were high on the list of selection criteria.

With the demographics and growth in numbers of elderly passengers this type of service would seem to have a growing future. Especially, if the services are linked to frequently visited places and link seamlessly with other full schedule regular services. ■



News item: Toowoomba Sunbus is to trial a bus roaming service using a GPS supported booking system.



Kan-Go Service — independent comment by a passenger on the demonstration run

Success of this service is dependent on the GPS system and prospective passengers giving their phone number and address to be kept in a database for future use. Whilst acknowledging that this is available (in the main) in the telephone directory it will be perceived by some of the target passengers (older citizens) as a further invasion of privacy.

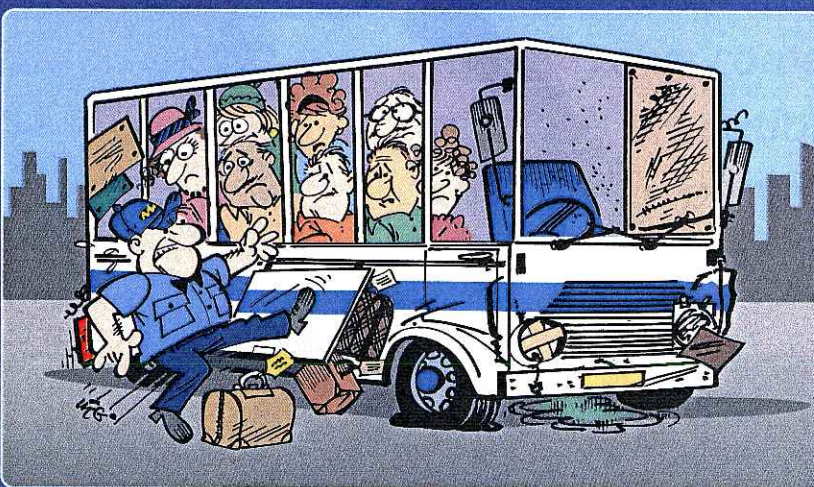
It will be necessary in the early stages of the service to ensure the correct people are employed to glean this information from passengers in a manner that inspires confidence and a feeling that they are being helped in a comforting way.

Driving staff are the frontline troops in this and need to be chosen carefully to provide the service required. If the driver who was used on the demonstration ride is any indication of what to expect (and he is one of the first two to be chosen), then Kan-go should be a winner.

Terry Woolnough

ALL THE LATEST BUS & COACH NEWS ONLINE @ www.busnews.com.au

SOME INSURERS THINK THEY KNOW ABOUT REPAIRING BUSES!



Contact your local licensed Insurance Broker

e-mail: insurebuses@abcua.com.au

abcua
australian bus & coach underwriting agents

A DIVISION OF AUSTAGENCIES PTY LTD

ABN 76 006 090 464 AFS Licence No. 244584

ABCUA-21B