



Meet › STAR Community Transport

STAR Community Services is Queensland's leading not-for-profit organisation providing transport and quality care to the elderly, frail, and those with disabilities. They have provided personalized transport to more than 6000 members of the Redlands community for a healthier, independent life.



Growing Through Technology & Sustaining a Vision to Improve Seniors' Quality of Life

STAR Community Transport has certainly come a long way since it started off in 1996 in Cleveland, Queensland, both in growth and technology. Then funded through a local government body with just a few cars, the not-for-profit agency gradually built up over time. STAR now serves more than 5,000 clients with over 30 vehicles, 22 of which are operated by STAR and the remainder by volunteer drivers within the Redlands community. The vision has stayed the same, however: to help seniors, the disadvantaged and the disabled unable to take traditional mass transport to maintain their independence and healthy lives through personalised transport.



"We were much smaller then. I can still remember the staff scheduling our customer trips by printing out a heap of paper every day and pasting trips together with coloured pens and highlighters on the floor," recalls Peter Mann, Business Development Manager at STAR. "It was 20 metres of paper- each brightly coloured with blues, yellows and pinks connecting vehicles together. It became apparent that the procedure was stressing staff beyond comprehension."

43
vehicles

Scheduling is often a challenge with transport agencies seeking to scale and improve efficiencies as matching trip lengths, pick up and drop of constraints, routes, individual passenger needs and funding schemes can get complex and time consuming. Inefficient scheduling often also affects customer service.

700,000
trips to
date

To bring some relief, STAR ultimately automated their scheduling through software, but soon found that the capabilities of that software were still limiting. In 2013, STAR decided it was time to change to a more comprehensive software system.

480
volunteers

"We needed a technology platform that could take us further," said Mann. "After seeing how Routematch worked, we immediately saw the potential."

STAR's average trip length is 20 kilometres, but STAR sometimes performs significantly longer trips such as spanning 50 kilometres to Brisbane hospitals



and back if the client requires one. To increase performance on all of these trips, STAR must **effectively optimise** for as many passengers as possible especially since ridership demand has spiked year over year, with 100 new clients added each month.

Unfortunately, government funding has not spiked with rider demand. Since then, the non-profit boosted efficiencies by accommodating more people in fewer cars which has in turn given STAR a position of greater financial security. As the staff booked more trips and learned more about other functionalities, **STAR expanded**



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their technology footprint, installing tablets for GPS mapping of addresses within the cars for automated vehicle location.

"The benefits are very real and are well beyond our expectations. **We've benefited 20% in revenue for kilometre and passenger per car due to Routematch's scheduling features.** Our call centre staff run our operations very well now," said Mann.

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Planning for the Future

"Generating efficiencies and finding new ways to provide better rider service is more important now than ever before; we have to **smartly prepare for the future**, particularly since new NDIS changes will occur in the next few years," added Mann.

Under the new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the federal government will directly allocate transport funding to individual client riders rather than in bulk funding to agencies. **Riders will therefore be allowed to choose from different mobility options to use for those funds.** This is a major shift from how transport agencies operated in the past, and presents both opportunities and challenges. Retaining and attracting customers through quality service will be critical and STAR is seeking to build a stronger foundation now to more nimbly compete and manoeuvre in the market. Furthermore, STAR plans to expand services into neighbouring areas and has already ventured into collaborative

partnerships. STAR recently, for example, began managing Ipswich's Coordinating Organisation for the Disabled (CODI) transport services, adding 10 cars to their fleet. Due to STAR's success, interest for similar assistance from other organisations has risen.

"What sets Routematch apart is that the company has **extensive resources to innovate and set us up for the future,**" said Mann. "We also have found the people there to be partners and the support team helpful. We're already looking into new Routematch technologies to let our clients pay through **automated fare collection** on their mobile phones. This will provide greater convenience for our customers."

To deepen its relationships with the community and advance its core competencies in senior care, STAR soon plans to diversify its offerings, recognising that transport connects multiple service areas and that transport is a continuum. The agency will branch out into wellness, volunteer placement and providing certification and training for other community groups and organisations seeking to care for seniors. Having **flexible technology** will help them become a multi-service operator.

"Transport links everything together across all of these different areas. Without it, seniors cannot get to these activities," said Mann. "**We're evolving and providing more service to our customers with technology, and excited about the new opportunities to come.**"

Challenges:

- > Scheduling Issues
- > Staff Stress
- > Customer Service

Solutions:

- > RSE (Routematch Scheduling Engine)
- > Tablets
- > Scalable Platform
- > Lasting Partnership

Future Innovations:

- > Automated Fare Collection
- > Mobile Apps
- > Mobility Services



Connected in Transit

Routematch Case Studies:

Discover agencies like yours who have found success with Routematch