

## **Defining Practical "Consistent Look and Feel" for Light Rail Customers and Road Users**

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### **Abstract**

With the move towards integrated public transport systems, providing a consistent look and feel for both customer service and marketing purposes has become more important than ever. The Human Factors profession recognises that consistency in the system can reduce injuries and errors, increasing safety. However, consistency in look and feel is not well defined.

This paper describes how a transport agency defined what is meant by consistent look and feel so that the benefits of consistency could be gained without providing unnecessary constraints on the systems designers. The result is a publically available guideline for suppliers of light rail to NSW.

### **Background**

Over a short period, three light rail systems were announced in NSW, Australia, introducing a new on-road transport mode into NSW. The projects were issued as independent contracts aiming to generate strong market competition. As the three projects developed, 'consistent look and feel for customers and road users on and around light rail' was identified as necessary. The Asset Standards Authority Human Factors team recognised that this concept was seen as intangible and difficult to define with people interpreting it in different ways. Some interpreted it to mean everything looked exactly the same, while others considered it to be full interoperability between the systems. Recognising a need for a better understanding of the concept, we took on the challenge of defining what this meant practically in terms of benefits for the customer and road users on or around light rail.

### **Method**

Our starting point was determining what the benefits of consistency were. In doing so we also considered what the benefits of difference were.

Next we defined what elements of the light rail system affected customers and road users on and around the system that we needed to consider for consistency and difference.

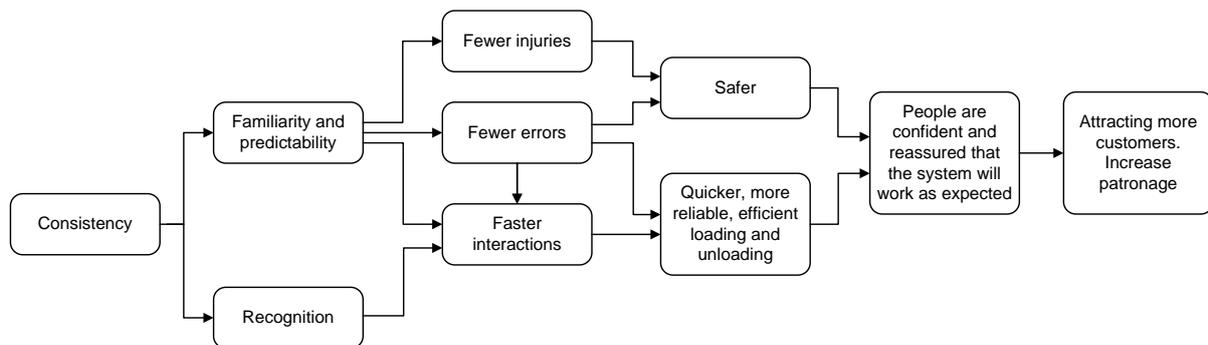
From this we determined there were levels of consistency required and developed a schema that defined seven levels; the highest being consistency across all NSW (all public transport) to the lowest being no need for consistency at all.

Armed with our initial findings we used a collaborative approach engaging road authorities, safety, customer services, designers (engineers, architects, urban planners, ...), individual project representatives and disability policy groups to determine where benefit from

consistency, and at what level it was best applied. This approach ensured that a multi-disciplinary perspective was achieved and ensured buy in from all relevant areas of the agency.

## Results

We determined the benefits of consistency in design for public transport were focused around recognition, familiarity and predictability. Figure 1 shows that the latter two can lead to a system that is safer through fewer injuries and errors.



*Figure 1. The benefits of consistency for public transport (From TfNSW, 2017)*

The benefits of difference we identified included making places distinctive and attractive, local identity, geography, corridor context, competition between suppliers, improvements and innovations in technology and improved design over time.

The result was a set of tables that provided the level of consistency, the key driver for that level of consistency (recognition, safety, error and interaction speed) and notes providing more specific information for that element. Using the framework enabled the benefits of both consistency and difference to be realised and their dis-benefits to be minimised.

At the projects request, the working document was published as a guidance document (TfNSW, 2017).

## Conclusion

Using a collaborative approach we were able to develop and publish a practical guide for consistent look and feel for customers and road users on light rail systems. This publication allows NSW transport projects to better integrate and deliver an appropriate consistent look and feel for customers and road users on and around the light rail network.

## References

TfNSW. (2017). T LR HR 00003 GU Consistent look and feel for Customers and Road Users of light rail. Sydney: Asset Standards Authority (available at <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/industry/standards-and-accreditation/standards/find-a-standard/consistent-look-and-feel-for>)