*Acknowledgments*

*Abstract*

(Quick summary of the dissertation)

# Problem Specification.

The original problem specification is located in the appendices…

## 1.1 Problem description.

The concept of car sharing has received a lot of attention over the last few years. The idea is heavily supported by the Intelligent Energy Europe commission as it promotes efficient use of existing resources, contributes to the reduction of CO2 emissions and also helps to reduce the number of cars on the road by utilizing existing car space more efficiently.

The following project brief, provided by Kainos, a local software development company in Belfast has served as the foundation for my problem specification:

**Project aim:  *Create an app to facilitate the matching up of car sharing participants.***

***The application should allow users to advertise or search for car sharing participants. It should allow users to enter start/end locations, route, travel times.  Once a match is made the driver should be notified so they can approve. Once approval is received the application should provide a way for the driver and passenger to communicate.***

***The application could be extended by gamifying the driver role. The application could reward points to drivers for lift sharing and display a leader board of the results.***

## 1.2 Problems with current approach

Despite a number of well-established car sharing services already in existence, users suffer from a lack of a truly mobile platform bringing together the features of a car sharing service and combining them with the advantages that mobile devices offer. The most notable pitfalls include:

- Users must perform explicit search for every journey apply for thus wasting their time for a feature that could be automated.

- Users are limited to a range of cities and locations recognised by the system often unable to search for journeys whose departure and destination points are not near their desired locations.

- Automatic push notifications should be implemented along with standard email notifications to alert user of a relevant event immediately rather than wait for them to read their inbox.

- Users might not feel safe while travelling in a car with stranger whom they never met before.

## 1.3 Solution

A truly mobile car sharing application will utilise the features provided by the Android framework to create a user friendly, secure and fully functional car sharing platform. Using their Android handheld devices, users would be able to search for and offer journeys that will immediately become visible to other users of the system. The app aims at bringing together everyone who wishes to participate in car sharing through various in-app social features that will allow users to manage their friends, carry out real-time conversations as well as rate drivers and view feedback left by others.

To provide for better journey matching functionality, search engine will be based on a mathematical formula that will be able to perform intelligent location-aware search rather than string comparison and will work independently of the address format entered by the user. In addition, the search function will be extended to make use of Google Maps API in order to provide a location aware system that’s able to provide users with recommendations when results matching their exact criteria are currently unavailable. In addition, users will not be constrained to a specific address format which can be advantageous in a situation where only parts of the desired address is known. The geocoding system used inside the app will be flexible enough to translate even a partial or incomplete address into a real-world location.

Personalisation features will give users the ability to create their own journey preferences and be automatically notified by the system when a journey matching their preferences becomes available.

Through numerous social features, users are able to maintain list of their friends, carry conversations in real time using the app’s built in instant messenger as well as view profiles of other users and be able to change their own privacy settings essentially controlling what aspects of their profile are visible to their friends and other users of the system.

To improve the sense of security, the app features a rating system where users can leave feedback and rating for the drivers. Global leader-board of the best drivers together with their feedback and scores will be maintained by the system and visible to all users.

## 1.4 Advantages of the new approach

This application will benefit the end user in the following ways:

* The application’s search engine, being one of the most important components of the entire system, will need to be able to provide more than just results that are exact match for user’s search criteria. It will need to be able to perform intelligent-search that will be able to provide journey recommendations based on user’s location. To achieve this, the search engine will be implemented as a mathematical function that will perform distance analysis. In addition, the search engine will work independent of the address format entered by the user as it will only operate on latitude and longitude values.
* The concept of journey templates will free the user from the requirement of performing explicit search when wish to find a journey. Each time a journey is posted by another user, existing journey templates present in the database will be analysed and if a match is found, its user will be automatically notified with means of contacting the offering driver. This will not only save a lot of user’s time but also reduce the unnecessary server load and preserve the battery life of users’ Android device.
* User’s sense of security will be improved through various social features built-in to the application. The ability to leave and read driver’s feedback left by other users together with a score rating will provide them with an insight into the driver’s pat performance history. Creating private journeys only visible to user’s friends will ensure only known individuals whom the user trusts will be able to apply.
* Improved user interaction will be achieved with the help of instant-messenger and chat rooms built into the application. Users will be able to exchange messages in real-time with their friends and all of the passengers participating in a journey will be able to carry out a conversation in a multi-user journey chat room even if they are not in one another’s friends lists.

## 1.5 Goals

The core goal is to implement the entire solution consisting of the Android app, WCF web service as well as the administrator’s panel by 15th of May 2014.

A working prototype is scheduled to be presented on the week beginning 9th of December.

## 1.6 Requirements

The below list of requirements is a direct result of the requirements elicitation process which involved interviewing potential users of the app and was carried out before the development phase. The MoSCoW technique has been used as means of prioritisation for each individual piece of functionality.

**Must haves:**

Represent requirements that must be satisfied in order for the final solution to be considered successful.

* User registration/login
* A web based admin panel to allow Administrator to log in and manage the system. **(Modified)**
* Searching for car share listings by start & end locations as well as date.
* Ability for users to post new car share listings and specify dates, locations and fee.
* Save a list of user trips**. (Modified)**
* Exchange messages with other users via the application.
* Implementation of Google Maps API to find cities and plot routes on the map.
* Quick search facility with locations and dates based on user defined search criteria**.(Modified)**

**Should haves:**

Represent high-priority items that should be included in the final solution.

* Advanced search options such as: women only, smokers, type of vehicle, fee, and number of seats.
* Rating system based on passengers experience with leader board.

**Could haves:**

Represent a requirement which is considered desirable but not necessary.

* Service in the background with notifications when a car share becomes available. **(Modified)**
* Specify the main stops in the journey.
* Allow users to specify a radius from the start and end locations in miles.
* Allow users to specify a city region from the start and end locations in miles. **(Deleted)**
* Instant messaging feature to allow app users exchange messages in real time.
* Search for car share listings with the help of GPS to find the one with nearest start location. **(Modified)**

**Would like to haves:**Represents a requirement which is unlikely to be included in the final solution but represents functionality that could be implemented in the future release.

* Live driver tracking using GPS.
* Possible integration with Facebook and Google+

## 1.7 Requirement Modifications.

This section explains the list of changes that have been made to the original list of requirements.

* A web based admin panel to allow Administrator to log in and manage the system. **(Modified)**

After reviewing the concept of the applications administrator panel with both of my supervisors, Seamus Sands and Garth McFalrand of Kainos, it has been unanimously decided that the admin panel should be instead implemented as a desktop application. The admin panel should not be available to the outside world nor should it be visible to the regular end user. It is for these reasons that the administrator’s panel should be accessible via a third-party app.

* Save a list of user trips**. (Modified)**

This requirement has been modified as a result of an important design decision made at an early stage of the development phase. For security purposes, all user information will be stored in a remote database that will be accessed through a web service residing in the service layer. Accessing information remotely will not only allow me to preserve the principles of multi-tier application design but will also allow the Android app to always stay in sync with the web service by downloading the most up-to-date data each time the user logs in. Another advantage is that user accounts will not in any way be tied to a specific Android device meaning users could log into the system from any Android device and access their information regardless.

* Quick search facility with locations and dates based on user defined search criteria**.(Modified)**

The quick search facility has been replaced with user defined journey templates. Those templates are then used by the web service to notify the user once a journey which matches the template parameters has been offered. They can however, also be used to perform a one-click search simply by holding the finger on the desired template for a few seconds.

* Service in the background with notifications when a car share (journey) becomes available. **(Modified)**

The concept of a service running in the background checking for new data has been replaced with push notifications provided by the Google Cloud Messaging (GCM) service. Sending push notifications directly to the phone instead of polling the server at regular intervals is a much more effective and efficient way of synchronising the application’s state and retrieving the latest information. It reduces the server load by making the Android application only call the web service when there is new data waiting to be downloaded. This also has a positive effect on the device’s battery life since web requests are computationally expensive.

* Allow users to specify a city region from the start and end locations in miles. **(Deleted)**

With the help of Google Maps API and location aware search, there is no need to ask the user to specify the city region of their desired location. Instead, users will be asked to enter a specific location and provide a radius in miles which will not only extend the search area but also provide a higher likelihood of finding journey that matches user’s criteria.

* Search for car share listings (journeys) with the help of GPS to find the one with nearest start location. **(Modified)**

When user performs a journey search or when they create a new journey template, they are required to specify the departure and destination points. The Android application will provide the user with special GPS buttons which will acquire user’s current location and perform geocoding to extract the address. This will save users from the effort of entering the address manually.

## 1.8 Hardware & Software Platform.

The entire solution will consist of four major components, the client application running on the mobile device, the web service which the mobile device will interact with, the database where all the information will be stored and finally the administrator panel giving the system administrator super user privileges. Below is a detailed breakdown of the hardware and software platforms on which each of the above components will be deployed.

* **Mobile application.** Developed using Android’s native environment deployable on any Android device. Choosing native Android environment over any of the “Write once deploy everywhere” solutions will provide full unrestricted access to all of the features offered by the Android framework without any performance penalty providing full access to the device. //TODO explain why Android? Not iOS or Windows Phone?
* **Web Service.** Based on WCF REST 4.0, the web service will provide a scalable and extensible communication channel between the mobile application and the database where all the user and journey information will be stored. The API exposed by the service will make it possible to additional clients based on different platforms such as iOS to be developed.

The web service will utilise HTTP as its primary transport protocol making use of the HTTP verbs such as POST and GET. //TODO, Explain RPC with RESTful subsystem?

The web service will be deployed to the cloud services provided by Amazon Web Services (AWS) which will provide for secure and scalable server infrastructure.

* **Database & Data Access Layer.** Deployed using Microsoft’s SQL Server with Entity Framework on top will provide for rapid database model modifications and regeneration when required. Entity Framework will provide a means of accessing the database data in terms of entities allowing to focus primarily on the business logic instead of writing SQL queries whilst providing protection against SQL injection attacks.
* **Administrator Panel.** A WPF MVC/MVVM Windows application deployable on any Windows machine or any Linux machine that can simulate Windows environment. For exclusive access by the administrator.

## 1.9 Development Languages & Technologies used.

The mobile application will be developed using Android’s native language Java using Google’s Android Studio IDE which provides full support for writing Android applications. The entire backend stack of the system, that is the web service and the data access layer will be developed using .NET 4.5 and C# as the development language.

## 1.10 Testing

Testing, being integral part to the development process, will be performed on a number of levels. These are as following:

* Functional testing – testing the functionality of user interfaces in the mobile application.
* Unit testing – testing the functionality of a particular method or class in the mobile application and the web service.
* Integration/Acceptance testing – testing the functionality the entire web service stack by writing tests that mimic real user actions and interact with the database.

# Specification

This section focuses on defining the data model which is derived from the problem specification described in chapter 1. It also provides specification of the main functions of the system and possible error conditions.

## 2.1 Data Model

Below is a list of data models to be used within the system:

**User** - represents a real-world user entity who registers and interacts with the system. Users can register, log-in, create journeys, apply for journeys, make modifications, cancel, add/delete friends and more.

* UserId (int)
* ProfilePicture (ProfilePicture)
* UserName (string)
* EmailAddress (string)
* FirstName (string)
* LastName (string)
* DateOfBirth (DateTime)
* Gender (enum)
* GCMRegistrationID (string)
* Friends (List<User>)
* Status (enum)
* Rating (List<Rating>)
* LastLogon (DateTime)
* MemberSince (DateTime)
* PhoneNumber (string)
* AverageRating(double)
* UnreadMessagesCount (int)
* JourneyTemplates (List<JourneyTemplate>)
* Notifications (List<Notification>)
* PrivacySettings (PrivacySettings)
* JourneysVisible (bool)
* VotesCount (int)

**Journey** – represents a journey object created by one of the users. Gathers all the information required to properly describe a journey together with its driver and passengers in one object.

* JourneyId (int)
* Driver (User)
* GeoAddresses (List<GeoAddress>)
* DateAndTimeOfDeparture (DateTime)
* Description (string)
* Fee (double)
* Pets (Boolean)
* AvailableSeats (int)
* Passengers (List<User>)
* Smokers (Boolean)
* Private (Boolean)
* VehicleType(enum)
* UnreadRequestsCount (int)
* JourneyStatus (enum)
* JourneyRequests (List<JourneyRequest>)
* CreationDate (DateTime)
* PreferredPaymentMethod (string)
* UnreadMessagesCount (int)

**JourneyRequest** - represents a journey request object that is sent from one user to another asking to join a specific journey.

* JourneyRequestId (int)
* JourneyId (int)
* Journey (Journey)
* FromUser (User)
* Message (string)
* Read (Boolean)
* Decision (Enum)
* SentOnDate (DateTime)
* DecidedOnDate (DateTime)

**FriendRequest** - represents a friend request object that is sent from one user to another when they wish to add a new friend to their friend’s list.

* FriendRequestId (int)
* FromUser (User)
* ToUser (User)
* Message (string)
* Decision (enum)
* Read (Boolean)
* SentOnDate (DateTime)
* DecidedOnDate (DateTime)

**Session** – represents a session object used in managing the session between the mobile application and the web service.

* UserId (int)
* DecideId (string)
* SessionId (String)
* ExpiryDate (DateTime)
* SessionType (enum)

**Rating** – represents a rating object used for leaving feedback by a journey passenger.

* RatingId (int)
* UserId (int)
* TargetUser (User)
* FromUser (User)
* LeftOnDate (DateTime)
* Score (int)
* Feedback (string)

**ProfilePicture** – represents an object that contains user’s profile picture saved as an array of bytes. The need to separate user’s profile picture from the main user object came as a result of a number of design decisions:

* Profile picture only needs to be downloaded once and stored in Least Recently Used (LRU) memory cache, there is no need to retrieve the picture from the server each time the user object is requested.
* Retrieving the user object without the profile picture results in a much smaller HTTP response thus speeding up the object serialisation and deserialization on both, the web service and the mobile application.

Profile Picture

* ProfilePictureId (int)
* ProfilePictureBytes (byte[])

**PrivacySettings**  - represents an object which contains user’s privacy settings. These are used when a user object is retrieved from the web service. Privacy settings determine which items inside user’s profile are visible and at what level, i.e. friends, everyone or private.

* PrivacySettingsId (int)
* EmailPrivacyLevel (enum)
* GenderPrivacyLevel (enum)
* DateOfBirthPrivacyLevel (enum)
* PhoneNumberPrivacyLevel (enum)
* RatingPrivacyLevel (enum)
* JourneysPrivacyLevel (enum)

**Notification** – represents a notification object. Notification is a system message intended for the user to let them know something that concerns them has taken place. Certain notifications have actions associated with them. For example when a new friend request is received, while others are just textual messages.

* NotificationId (int)
* UserId (int)
* User (User)
* ProfilePictureId (int)
* CollapsibleKey (int)
* NotificationType (enum)
* NotificationContentType (enum)
* NotificationMessage (string)
* TargetObjectId (int)
* Delivered (Boolean)
* ReceivedOnDate (DateTime)

**JourneyTemplate** – represents a journey template object used to enable automatic notifications and save users from the effort of performing manual search. Explain why duplicate data exists here.

* JourneyTemplateId (int)
* Alias (string)
* UserId (int)
* User (User)
* Fee (double)
* DepartureRadius (double)
* DestinationRadius (double)
* Pets (Boolean)
* Smokers (Boolean)
* VehicleType (Enum)
* GeoAddresses (List<GeoAddress>)
* DateAllowance (int)
* TimeAllowance (int)
* DateAndTimeOfDeparture (DateTime)
* SearchByDate (Boolean)
* SearchByTime (Boolean)
* CreationDate (DateTime)

**JourneyMessage** – represents a journey message object, used in multi-user journey chat rooms to transfer the messages.

* JourneyMessageId (int)
* JourneyId (int)
* SenderId (int)
* SenderUserName (string)
* MessageBody (string)
* SentOnDate (DateTime)
* SeenBy (List<User>)

**GeoAddress** – represents a real-world location used when offering and searching for journeys.

* GeoAddressId (int)
* Order (int)
* AddressLine (string)
* Latitude (double)
* Longitude (double)

**ChatMessage** – represents an instant message sent between two users using the instant-messenger feature.

* ChatMessageId (int)
* SenderId (int)
* RecipientId (int)
* MessageBody (string)
* SentOnDate (DateTime)
* Read (Boolean)
* RecipientUserName (string)
* SenderUserName (string)