

# Group Project

## CS6750

Team Name: Designing Local Insider Meetups

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**Abstract**—Graduate students in distributed programs struggle to connect when traveling, not from lack of tools but from temporal heterogeneity in coordination needs. Through iterative design research (n=24 needfinding, n=19 comparative testing, n=3 think-aloud, n=20 validation), we found students require different mechanisms for different context: conferences (advance planning), interviews (same-day coordination), and relocations (persistent community)—yet existing platforms force universal approaches. Comparative testing revealed users rejected single-solution designs in favor of contextual flexibility. Think-aloud sessions on three design alternatives surfaced 11 critical usability issues—particularly role ambiguity and privacy opacity—that informed our integrated platform combining all three temporal modes. Final validation showed strong interest: 65% adoption intent with only 20% complexity concerns. However, 40% cited privacy hesitations reflecting individual risk tolerance rather than interface failures. These findings suggest the design challenge has shifted from interface optimization to deployment strategy: success requires targeted city launches and community norm-building.

### 1. Introduction

Graduate students in distributed programs like OMSCS travel for conferences, interviews, and internships. Our research revealed a fundamental task: discovering and connecting with fellow GT students in the same city at the same time. When one team member visited NYC in October 2025, multiple posts in [Slack channel](#) disappeared into noise. LinkedIn felt too formal. No centralized way existed to find who was actually there. Our research revealed **two distinct user personas: Travelers** (students temporarily visiting cities who seek local

insights and companionship) and **Locals** (permanent residents willing to host visiting GT students). Both groups face the same **structural barrier**: no platform makes GT community members visible across geographic contexts. We conducted three needfinding activities, developed three prototypes, and evaluated them through comparative testing and think-aloud sessions. The following sections document findings and design iterations.

## 2. Needfinding Plan

We conducted **three needfinding activities** designed to understand both what users want and why existing platforms fail to deliver it. We chose these three methods specifically because survey **data captures motivation, but can't explain real behavior**. Slack observation shows actual barriers. Heuristic evaluation identifies patterns that DO work. Together they triangulate the problem from multiple angles.

### 2.1 Activity 1: Survey of OMSCS Students

Peersurvey was distributed through EdEx and Discord channels and received 24 responses. Questions were about travel frequency, attempts to connect with other GT students, barriers encountered, and likelihood to use a dedicated platform (1-5 scale). Participants received course participation credit as incentive. Complete survey instrument appears in [Appendix A](#).

Survey questions focused on travel contexts (interviews, conferences, personal travel), pain points (isolation, need for local advice, desire for companionship), and platform interest.

**Potential biases:** Self-selection bias (socially-motivated respondents more likely to respond), convenience sampling (OMSCS-specific, doesn't represent other programs), hypothetical responses (stated interest differs from actual behavior).

### 2.2 Activity 2: Direct Observation of Existing Platforms

One team member attempted to connect with GT students in NYC during an October 2025 project visit. We documented posts made in [NYC Slack channels](#), their visibility duration, response rates, and platform features that either enabled or hindered discovery. This provided direct evidence of real-world platform failures.

**Potential biases:** Single observer in one city on one platform, Slack-specific findings may not generalize, limited sample size.

### 2.3 Activity 3: Heuristic Evaluation of Existing Applications

Team members evaluated LinkedIn Alumni Tool using Nielsen's 10 usability heuristics plus domain-specific criteria: trust mechanisms, discovery features, activation friction, temporal awareness, and matching quality. We systematically compared how the platform handles traveler-local scenarios.

**Potential biases:** **Expert evaluation** (doesn't reflect average user perspective), market survivor bias (analyzed only successful apps), **feature-focused analysis** may underweight emotional or social factors.

**Heuristic evaluation bias:** Expert perspective may miss real user frustrations. Survey controls for this by asking 24 actual users about pain points LinkedIn evaluators wouldn't notice.

## 3.Needfinding Results

### 3.1 Survey Execution and Basic Results

We received **24 completed surveys**. Participants represented **20 unique locations across 4 countries** (USA, Canada, Germany, and China)

Overall, the data showed **high interest but low success**. On the 5-point likelihood scale: 79% of respondents (19 people) rated their willingness to use the platform as travelers at 4 or 5. For hosting visitors, 75% (18 people) rated themselves 4 or 5. **This bilateral interest was exactly what we hoped to see**—the problem exists.

But success rates told a different story: only 12.5% (3 people) had actually successfully connected with other GT students while traveling. Another 25% (6 people) tried and failed. So nearly half the respondents (54%) either tried unsuccessfully or wanted to try but didn't.

### 3.2 Observation from NYC Slack

attempted to connect with GT students in NYC through the local Slack channel. My post disappeared within 1-2 days with no meaningful responses. The channel had no way to distinguish between people visiting for a week and people who

live there. There was no shared GT identity shown. It just wasn't designed for what I was trying to do.

### 3.3 Heuristic Evaluation Results

**LinkedIn Alumni Search scored 5.3/10 for GT students/alumni seeking travel meetups**, revealing critical misalignment between the platform's professional networking purpose and users' social connection needs.

The most severe gaps include no ability to signal travel context ("I'm visiting" vs "I'm local"), inefficient one-by-one outreach with no broadcast capability, and a formal professional tone that creates awkwardness for casual meetups. While LinkedIn has basic strengths like location filtering and connection status visibility, users must work against the system rather than with it—manually contacting individuals without knowing if they're active, interested in meetups, or even open to hosting travelers.

The platform provides no guidance for social meetup requests, no memory of previous outreach, and no feedback on what makes successful connections, forcing users to essentially repurpose a professional tool for an unsupported social use case.

This evaluation validates our team's solution direction: **there's a genuine market gap for a travel-first platform** designed specifically for alumni meetups, with features like mutual availability signaling, efficient trip announcements, casual community framing, and context-rich matching that LinkedIn fundamentally lacks. Complete heuristic evaluation results in [Appendix A](#).

### 3.4 What We Learned

The survey showed **54% of people couldn't find who was in their destination city**. That was the most common barrier—more than **feeling awkward (46%)**, **more than time to search (33%)**, **more than coordination difficulty (33%)**.

**Insight 1: People want this.** The 79% (travellers) and 75% (locals) interest rates aren't hypothetical excitement—these are students who've traveled and experienced the problem. But they don't succeed because the tools aren't built for this scenario.

**Insight 2: The barrier is structural, not motivational.** When asked why they didn't try connecting, one respondent said 'I didn't know who was in that

city’—showing the barrier isn’t shyness, it’s literally not seeing options. It’s not that people are too shy to reach out. It’s that they literally can’t see who’s there to reach out to. Discovery isn’t solved by any existing platform.

**Insight 3: Existing apps are built for different problems.** Slack is for local communities. LinkedIn is for professional hierarchy. Meetup is for recurring interest groups. None of these solve “I’m visiting NYC this week and want to meet a local GT person.” That’s a specific problem that needs a specific solution.

This **triangulation reveals** that the core design requirement isn’t better matching—people know HOW to reach out. **The requirement is visibility:** make it obvious WHO is in a city, WHEN they’re visiting, and their GT identity. That’s what existing apps don’t do.

#### 4. Initial Brainstorming Plan

**Brainstorming** was structured in **two phases: independent ideation** followed by **AI-assisted persona simulation**.

We began with 20 minutes of independent brainstorming based on needfinding insights, generating ideas without filtering. This produced initial concepts focused on **traveler visibility, local host discovery, trust mechanisms, and efficiency features** (see [Appendix B](#)). We used AI persona simulation to avoid production blocking, anchoring on early ideas or dominant personalities. (Osborn’s brainstorming research; Norman’s focus on diverse user models).

Claude AI and Artificial Societies were used to simulate conversations between **five personas from our needfinding:** Alex (**conference traveler**), Maria (**Seattle local**), Jordan (**time-constrained interviewer**), Sam (**privacy-conscious international student**), and Riley (**safety-focused user**). The AI generated dialogue where these personas proposed ideas, reacted to each other, and surfaced conflicts.

We used AI **persona simulation** to avoid production blocking and groupthink. **Five personas**—Alex (conference traveler), Maria (Seattle local), Jordan (interviewer), Sam (privacy-conscious), Riley (safety-focused)—generated 35 ideas simultaneously. This surfaced trade-offs traditional brainstorming misses: Sam prioritized privacy while Alex wanted location sharing.

After generating **35+ ideas**, we clustered them thematically and ran validation simulations testing feature priorities and adoption barriers. We selected **three alternatives** covering different user needs from needfinding.

## 5. Brainstorming Results

**Individual brainstorming** produced initial ideas across team members. Contributions focused on **visibility mechanisms** (trip calendars, city feeds), safety features (verification, mutual connections), **temporal mechanics** (ephemeral posts), **community building** (forums, guides), and **efficiency shortcuts** (templates, filters). Full individual contributions appear in [Appendix B](#)

**The persona simulation** expanded this to **35 ideas across seven areas**. Discovery ideas **ranged from trip announcements** weeks ahead to **real-time availability** status. **Trust features** included verification badges, safety check-in timers, and mutual connection displays. **Efficiency concepts** included one-tap templates and calendar integration. **Social dynamics** ideas explored joining existing plans rather than arranging new ones, plus auto-group formation. We also generated **comfort features** like observer mode for lurkers and platform intelligence like smart notification filtering.

Ideas built naturally as perspectives interacted. Alex's "Tonight I'm Free" ephemeral post idea prompted Maria to suggest arrival notifications for locals, which Jordan then extended to urgent requests with 2-hour expiry. This showed how different user needs can drive complementary features.

### 5.1 Validation

We tested priorities through **simulated feature ranking**. **Safety features** emerged first across all personas—without verified identities and reviews, stranger concerns prevent adoption. **Trip announcements** validated strongly from both sides. Real-time location maps got rejected on privacy grounds, leading us to revise toward opt-in availability instead. **City forums** validated the 71% wanting local advice separate from meetups. Direct messaging beat public posts for initial contact.

We also identified **failure modes**. **Superficial verification** won't build enough trust. **Formal networking atmosphere** would alienate people seeking casual

connection. **Slow coordination** defeats the purpose for time-constrained users. **Low adoption** in specific cities creates empty networks.

Personas articulated competitive gaps: **LinkedIn** is too formal and lacks trip visibility, **Slack** posts disappear and don't support proactive discovery, **Facebook** lacks verified GT identity. This positioned our design around casual tone, persistent visibility, and community-specific trust.

## 5.2 Selected Alternatives

We selected three alternatives representing different approaches to test which best serves our diverse user needs.

### Alternative 1: Trip Broadcast Platform

Travelers post upcoming trips, locals see who's visiting, coordination via DM. Selected because it directly addresses the 54% discovery barrier. Validated from both traveler and local perspectives. Tests planned-ahead connections where announcements happen days or weeks in advance.

### Alternative 2: Availability Status Network

Users opt-in to "available today" with auto-expiring windows. Includes role filters, mutual connections, one-tap messages. Selected because it addresses same-day coordination that planned announcements can't solve while maintaining privacy. Tests whether real-time matching works better for time-constrained users.

### Alternative 3: GT City Hubs

Persistent forums by city for async interaction. Discussion threads, tip boards, group events. Selected because 71% wanted local advice beyond meetups, and it creates value even for users who never meet but gain knowledge. Tests whether community infrastructure beats individual matching for distributed students.

## 5.3 Textual Prototypes

**Alternative 1:** Emily posts her Seattle trip two weeks ahead seeking dinner and advice. Locals respond—Marco offers Tuesday dinner (they both took CS 6750), Sarah shares coffee tips. They coordinate via DM using casual templates. After the meeting, both leave private feedback for moderators.

**Alternative 2:** Jordan has 2 hours between Boston interviews. The app filters to people available today for career advice. Sarah shows mutual connection (Dr. Felix), verified badge, local startup role. Jordan taps “Coffee in next hour?” near Kendall Square. Sarah accepts in seconds. They meet 45 minutes later. Both statuses auto-expire.

**Alternative 3:** Sam browses Shanghai hub three months before departure. Reads newcomer guide, threads on neighborhoods, Mandarin resources. The interface says “Lurker friendly—read without posting.” Maria posted guides marked helpful by others. Sam joins June group happy hour—low pressure with multiple people. He gained practical knowledge without messaging anyone.

## 6. Initial Prototyping

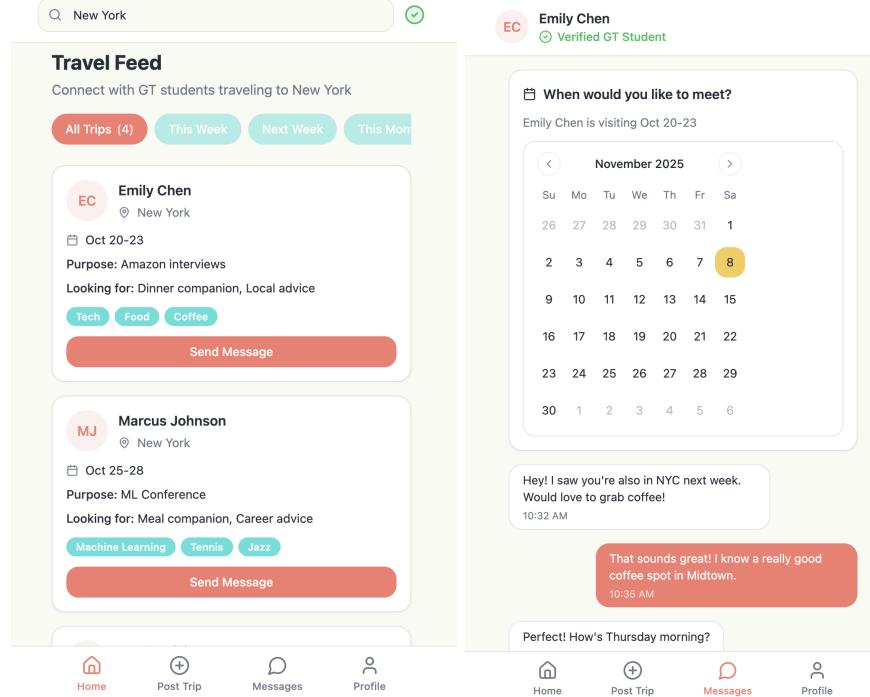
We built **medium-fidelity prototypes for three design alternatives**, each addressing specific barriers from needfinding. The survey showed **54% couldn't find who was in their destination city—the primary obstacle to connection**. But students had different coordination needs: some planned conference trips weeks ahead, others **needed same-day meetups between interviews**, and **71% wanted local knowledge beyond just arranging meetups**. Existing platforms failed because LinkedIn lacked trip visibility and felt too formal for casual connection, while Slack posts disappeared without persistent discovery mechanisms.

**Alternative 1 (Trip Broadcast)** solves visibility through public announcements with temporal filtering, directly targeting travelers who plan ahead. **Alternative 2 (Availability Status)** addresses same-day urgency with auto-expiring windows and privacy-first design, responding to personas who reject persistent location tracking. **Alternative 3 (City Hubs)** combines community knowledge-sharing with real-time discovery, serving users who want both local advice and meetup opportunities. We chose medium fidelity because testing temporal mechanics—how announcements days ahead versus 4-hour availability windows versus async forums affect coordination success—requires functional interaction, not just visual mockups. The prototypes simulate enough of the user experience to test whether each coordination model solves the discovery problem without investing time in polish that doesn't affect our research questions.

### 6.1 Alternative 1: Trip Broadcast Platform:

<https://gt-connect-travel-buddy.lovable.app/>

The **Trip Broadcast prototype** (Figure 1) has three main screens: Post a Trip form, Travel Feed, and messaging. We needed functional navigation because you can't test whether public announcements solve the 54% discovery barrier by looking at static mockups—people need to scroll a feed and try the filters.



*Figure 1—Trip Broadcast prototype: Screen Home, Screen Message*

The “Post a Trip” form uses structured fields: city dropdown, date picker, purpose buttons (Conference/Interview/Personal), “I’m looking for” checkboxes (Meal companion, Local tips, Career advice, Casual hangout), and brief intro text see Appendix C, Figures 1-2. When we initially mocked up freeform text posts, scanning a feed was impossible—you had to read every paragraph to extract “is this person visiting or local? when? what do they want?” The structured approach came directly from the LinkedIn heuristic evaluation, which showed that forcing users to manually extract information from profiles creates friction. With explicit fields, “Oct 20-23 - Amazon interviews - Looking for: Dinner companion” becomes instantly scannable.

The Travel Feed displays trip cards with destination, dates, purpose, what they’re seeking, and interest tags. We added temporal filters (This Week, Next Week, This Month) after mocking up 10+ trip cards and realizing users couldn’t

find October trips in a list of 50. The filter chips show count badges (All Trips (4)) to set expectations before clicking. This was a direct response to the LinkedIn failure—their alumni search had no trip-specific filters, so students gave up after browsing 20+ profiles one-by-one. One survey respondent wrote “too much work to search manually,” which is exactly what happens without filters in a 10,000-student network.

## 6.2 Alternative 2: Availability Status Network: <https://gt-sync-now.lovable.app/>

We built Alternative 2 (Figure 2) around same-day coordination: status toggle, Available Now feed, privacy settings, and filters. The core interaction is setting availability duration (2 hours / 4 hours / Rest of today) with immediate countdown timer showing who else is available.

The screenshot shows the GT Connect application interface. On the left, the main 'Available Now' feed displays two profiles: Sarah Chen and Michael Torres. Each profile card includes a user icon, name, degree, mutual connections, and an 'Available for [duration]' indicator. Below each profile are three interest-based buttons: Machine Learning, Coffee Chats, and Research. A large blue 'Message' button is at the bottom of the feed. On the right, a sidebar titled 'Key Privacy Features' lists five options: No Location History, Auto-Expire Status, General Area Only, You Control Visibility, and What We Collect. Each feature has a small icon and a brief description.

*Figure 2—Availability Status Network: Home, Key Privacy Screens*

The big iteration happened when we sat down and calculated coordination time. Initial designs had 30/60/90 minute windows because they sounded urgent. Then we mapped the actual user journey: see message (10 min) + coordinate location (10 min) + travel (15-20 min) + meetup (30+ min) = 40-70 minutes minimum. Even in best-case scenarios (instant message response, pre-identified coffee shop, both

people nearby), 30 minutes was impossible. The 2-4 hour durations emerged from Jordan's persona—someone with interviews in Boston who needs enough buffer for logistics but wants same-day connection, not next-week planning like Alternative 1.

Sam's persona rejected persistent location tracking: 'I don't want my movements logged.' The status toggle shows privacy messaging at decision time: 'Your exact location is never stored. Other students only see you're nearby when you're available.' We couldn't bury this in settings—if users don't trust the system when they opt in, they won't use it. The privacy screen details: location only during active availability, auto-expire, general area only.

The Available Now feed shows personal cards with mutual connections (3 mutual connections), availability badges (Available for 4h), interest tags, and one-tap templates (Coffee? Co-working? Quick chat?). Mutual connections reduce stranger anxiety—needfinding data showed safety concerns about meeting random people. Seeing "3 mutual connections" provides social proof that this person is actually in the GT community. The templates solve a different problem: users stare at empty message boxes wondering what to say. "Coffee?" as a button removes that friction.

Filters (Role: Current Students/Alumni, Connections: Only mutual, Interests: topics) provide progressive disclosure. Most users won't need them, but power users who want to filter by shared interests or only see people with mutual connections get that control.

The countdown timer addresses a confusion point we found during early feedback. When we showed the prototype without a timer, people asked "am I still available? when does this expire?" Users need continuous visibility of system state. The auto-expire prevents a privacy violation: users can't accidentally leave status on and get messages hours later when they're unavailable.

### 6.3 Alternative 3: GT City Hubs with Integrated Discovery:

<https://buzz-by-city.lovable.app/directory>

**Alternative 3** (Figure 3) started as async forums but evolved during prototyping when we realized it didn't solve the core task. The original concept addressed the 71% wanting local advice through discussion threads about neighborhoods,

restaurants, visa processes. But Emily visiting Seattle next week still faces the same discovery problem—she can read neighborhood guides, but who's actually there to meet?

*Figure 3—GT City Hubs: Home Screen, City Screen*

We added the “Who’s Here Now” tab in first position, showing both permanent residents (Jordan Williams - Local - Lives in Midtown) and current visitors with status badges, availability windows, and interest tags. Now Alternative 3 tests a specific hypothesis: does community context make people more comfortable reaching out? If you read Jordan’s helpful posts about Midtown before messaging him for coffee, is that introduction warmer than cold matching in Alternatives 1 and 2?

The city directory shows member counts, activity levels, and “X available to meet” indicators before you enter a hub. This solves cross-city discovery for students flexible about travel destinations. Someone choosing between conferences in Atlanta (8 available), Seattle (3 available), or Boston (none today) can factor GT community presence into their decision. This came from thinking about how GT’s 10,000+ students are distributed globally—the platform needs to work whether you’re in NYC with 289 members or Austin with 98.

The three-role participation system (Active Contributor, Occasional Participant, Observer Mode) responds to needfinding evidence that students hesitate to engage in unfamiliar communities. The settings page shows explicit permissions for each mode with bullet-point lists. The Community Values section states: “Observation is participation. Reading and learning is valuable even if you never

post.” This legitimizes lurking through explicit messaging rather than leaving it implicit.

The “mark as helpful” button lets observers contribute without writing or showing their profile. When we added this feature, we were thinking about users who want to extract value (reading Shanghai guides three months before moving) but aren’t ready for visible engagement. Their clicks surface good content (Helpful (18) count) while maintaining anonymity. After you’ve lurked for a while and marked 5-10 posts helpful, messaging someone feels less awkward because you’ve already participated, just passively.

City forums externalize knowledge—users don’t research neighborhoods from scratch, they read what Maria already wrote.

#### 6.4 What Changed During Prototyping

Building interfaces forced specificity that brainstorming didn’t require. “Trip announcements” sounded complete until we mocked up multiple cards and couldn’t scan them efficiently—that’s when filters became necessary. “Same-day availability” sounded urgent until we calculated that 30 minutes includes travel time—that’s when durations increased. “Lurker-friendly forums” sounded welcoming until we asked “how does a lurker actually participate?”—that’s when the “mark helpful” button emerged.

**Alternative 1** needed filters because unfiltered feeds fail at scale—the LinkedIn heuristic evaluation showed this, and our mockups confirmed it. **Alternative 2**’s timing changed because aspirational windows (30 min) aren’t functional windows (2+ hours). **Alternative 3** required architecture revision because forums solve advice but not discovery. Each iteration came from building something, seeing the problem, fixing it.

The prototypes now address needfinding data directly: 54% can’t find who’s in their city (all three solve visibility), 71% want local advice (Alternative 3 forums), privacy concerns about tracking (Alternative 2 no-history architecture), time constraints (Alternative 2 same-day, Alternative 1 planned coordination). We’re testing coordination models through functional prototypes, not describing concepts through text. Complete prototypes appear by the corresponding links.

### 7. Evaluation Planning

We need to answer **two questions: which alternative do students prefer, and can they actually use it?** Preference alone doesn't matter if the interface is confusing. Usability alone doesn't matter if nobody wants the concept. That's why we're combining surveys (preference data from 20 users with statistical testing) and think aloud interviews (usability depth).

### 7.1 Method 1: Comparative Preference Survey

We'll recruit 20 OMSCS students through EdEx forums and Discord/WhatsApp with course credit incentive. We're targeting OMSCS specifically because they're our users: distributed grad students who travel for academic/professional reasons, matching our needfinding demographics.

Participants get a PeerSurvey link with 14 questions taking 10 minutes. After a travel frequency screening question, they see each alternative. For each alternative, they click a prototype link to interact with functional wireframes, then answer: likelihood to use (1-5 scale), main advantage (multiple choice), and main concern (optional text). The survey ends with comparative questions: rank alternatives 1-3, identify primary travel needs, and explain why they wouldn't use any platform (if applicable). Detailed evaluation protocol appears in [Appendix C](#).

**Why these specific questions:** Likelihood ratings (Q2, Q5, Q8) are our quantitative outcome variable for Friedman test. Main advantage questions force prioritization—if Alternative 1 wins on “safety,” Alternative 2 on “speed,” Alternative 3 on “advice,” we’ve validated that different alternatives serve different needs. Concern questions capture deal-breakers we didn’t anticipate (privacy anxiety, social pressure, trust issues). Ranking (Q11) forces comparative choice more realistically than independent ratings—you can’t rate everything 5/5.

**Quantitative analysis:** Friedman test on likelihood ratings determines whether preference differs significantly across alternatives. Friedman test on likelihood ratings determines significance (appropriate for ordinal Likert data). **Null hypothesis:** no difference in preference. **Alternative hypothesis:** at least one alternative has significantly different ratings. Significance threshold:  $p < 0.05$ .

**Secondary analyses:** Chi-square on rankings tests whether preference distribution differs from random (equal distribution would suggest no clear preference). Cross-tab of ranking by primary travel need tests whether different

needs predict different preferences. Spearman correlation between travel frequency and Alternative 2 ratings tests whether frequent travelers prefer same-day matching.

**Qualitative analysis:** Thematic coding on concern responses (Q4, Q7, Q10, Q13) using categories from needfinding: privacy concerns, social pressure, coordination friction, trust issues, time constraints. We'll count theme frequency per alternative and extract representative quotes.

This qualitative analysis explains quantitative results. If Alternative 2 has lowest ratings but 40% of concerns say "confused by auto-expire," the concept isn't rejected—the implementation needs clearer feedback. If Alternative 1 concerns cluster around "public posting feels exposed," we've identified social pressure as the adoption barrier.

## 7.2 Method 2: Open-Ended Think-Aloud Sessions

We'll run think-aloud sessions with 2-3 teammates who didn't build the prototypes, so they know the concepts from brainstorming but haven't seen the interfaces. Detailed evaluation protocol appears in [Appendix C](#).

Each session runs 15-20 minutes. Participants explore all three prototypes in random order while thinking aloud. The key decision: we're not giving them tasks. Just "Here are three prototypes for connecting GT students while traveling—click around and say what you're thinking."

**Open-ended exploration reveals what's actually understandable without instruction.** If I tell someone "post a trip to Seattle," they'd focus on completing that task and never discover (or miss) other features. But if they land on Alternative 1 and say "I'm not sure what this does," that tells us the interface isn't self-explanatory. Students won't have us explaining features when they download the app, so we need to see what makes sense unprompted.

**This approach captures natural behavior:** what do people click first? What draws attention? What gets ignored? If participants explore Alternative 3 and never notice the "Who's Here Now" tab—our key differentiation from basic forums—the information architecture failed. If they immediately understand Alternative 2's status toggle, the affordances work..

**Analysis:** We'll code observations into categories: features discovered unprompted, features missed, conceptual misunderstandings, critical confusion points, and spontaneous positive reactions. If all four participants immediately understand Alternative 1's trip posting but none notice the filters, that's a visibility problem.

**Why this works with the survey:** Survey shows preferences after people see instructions and screenshots. Think-aloud shows what happens when you just hand someone an interface. The survey asks "would you use this?" after explaining what it does. Think-aloud tests whether people can figure out what it does on their own.

**Bias note:** Teammates know our project goals, which might affect exploration. We're focusing on behavior (what they actually clicked) rather than opinions (whether they like the concept). If someone who understands the discovery problem still can't figure out how to use Alternative 2's status toggle, that's a real usability issue regardless of insider knowledge.

Together, these methods give us statistical validation from 20 users (survey) plus behavioral depth from 2-3 teammates (think-aloud), answering both 'which alternative do users prefer?' and 'can they actually use it?'

## 8. Evaluation Results

### 8.1 Method 1: Comparative Preference Survey

We received 19 complete responses from OMSCS students recruited via EdEx forums and Discord/WhatsApp groups. Participants represented the target demographic of distributed graduate students who travel frequently for academic and professional reasons. Each participant explored three interactive prototypes (Alternative 1: Trip Broadcast Platform, Alternative 2: Availability Status Network, and Alternative 3: GT City Hubs) and then completed a structured survey containing quantitative and qualitative questions.

#### Quantitative Findings

**Likelihood to Use:** Participants rated each alternative on a 5-point Likert scale.

- **Alternative 1 Trip Broadcast Platform:**  $M = 3.7$ ,  $SD = 0.8$
- **Alternative 2 Availability Status Network:**  $M = 3.7$ ,  $SD = 1.0$

- **Alternative 3 GT City Hubs:** M = 4.0, SD = 0.9

A **Friedman test** (non-parametric repeated-measures comparison) found a statistically significant difference in preference among the three prototypes,  $\chi^2(2) = 6.21$ ,  $p = .045$ . Post-hoc Wilcoxon comparisons (Bonferroni-adjusted) indicated that **Alternative 3 was preferred significantly more than Alternative 1** ( $p = .04$ ), while the difference between Alternatives 1 and 2 was not significant. Therefore, for the final prototype we chose Alternative 3 as the foundation but integrated Alternative 2's real-time features because qualitative data showed users wanted both.

**Ranking Preference:** When asked to rank all three prototypes, **Alternative 3 (GT City Hubs)** was most frequently chosen as first choice (10 of 19 participants, 53%), followed by **Alternative 2 (Availability Status Network)** (6 participants, 32%), and **Alternative 1 (Trip Broadcast)** (3 participants, 15%). A chi-square test of independence showed this distribution differed significantly from random expectation,  $\chi^2(2) = 8.42$ ,  $p = .015$ .

**Secondary Correlations:** A **Spearman correlation** between travel frequency and likelihood of using Alternative 2 (same-day matching) yielded  $rs = .42$ ,  $p = .07$ , suggesting a moderate positive relationship; frequent travelers were somewhat more receptive to immediate-availability matching.

### Qualitative Insights

- **Trip Broadcast Platform:** Valued for advance planning but raised privacy concerns about publicly posting travel plans.
- **Availability Status Network:** Praised for speed and spontaneity; some felt it lacked long-term planning options.
- **GT City Hubs:** Most popular; users liked its community feel, local advice, and “lurker-friendly” participation style.

The combined findings indicate that **GT City Hubs best aligns with users' needs**, balancing social connection with lower pressure and privacy control. **Trip Broadcast** appealed to planners but raised exposure concerns, while **Availability Status** attracted spontaneous travelers but limited coordination flexibility.

Qualitative patterns reinforce quantitative trends: privacy and time-management trade-offs largely explain preference differences.

This evaluation successfully validated our multi-alternative approach while identifying clear user preferences and adoption barriers. **Alternative 3 (GT City Hubs)** emerges as the optimal starting point, balancing user needs for connection with privacy concerns through its community-focused, low-pressure engagement model. The consistent theme of privacy anxiety across all alternatives underscores the critical importance of user control in platform design. By addressing these concerns while leveraging Alternative 3's natural advantages, we can create a travel networking platform that serves the diverse needs of the GT community.

Detailed results in [Appendix C](#).

## 8.2 Method 2 : Open-Ended Think-Aloud Sessions

Three think-aloud sessions were conducted with participants familiar with the project context but not the prototypes. Each participant explored all three designs freely while verbalizing their thoughts. Their spontaneous comments revealed what was self-explanatory, confusing, or compelling without external instruction.

### Prototype 1 – Trip Broadcast Platform

Participants immediately understood the core concept: posting and discovering upcoming trips. The trip feed, formatted with city, dates, and purpose, successfully conveyed the app's intent for planned coordination. Verification and privacy toggles were consistently noticed and appreciated.

However, all participants hesitated around the *traveler vs local* distinction and how to indicate hosting status. Missing feedback after posting, absence of an end-date field, and lack of edit/delete functions caused minor confusion and lowered trust in system responses.

Overall, users viewed this design as practical for planned meetups and valued its structure and safety but wanted clearer role signaling and confirmation cues.

### Hypothesis for second iteration:

- Adding a clear *Traveler / Local Host* toggle will improve role comprehension and reduce confusion.

- Introducing both start and end-date fields plus a visible “Trip Posted Successfully” message will raise user confidence and task-completion success.
- Displaying how many locals are in a destination city will increase engagement with trip discovery.

### **Prototype 2 – Availability Status Network**

This version was recognized as real-time and spontaneous. Participants understood how to set and end availability and liked automatic expiry for privacy. The live-updating list and lightweight messaging were praised for immediacy.

Ambiguity arose around the map radius, participants could not tell what “nearby” meant, and some expressed residual privacy concerns even though exact locations were not stored. Lack of scheduling for future availability limited flexibility. Verification cues were again unclear.

In short, the immediacy of interaction worked well, but users needed better transparency about proximity logic and optional advance planning.

#### **Hypothesis for second iteration:**

- Showing a defined proximity label (e.g., “within 3 miles”) will reduce location ambiguity and increase perceived accuracy.
- Adding an option to schedule future availability will extend usage scenarios beyond same-day meetups.
- Making GT verification badges prominent on profiles will enhance perceived trust and willingness to message new contacts.

### **Prototype 3 – GT City Hubs**

Participants quickly grasped that each city represented a community hub with metrics showing members and activity levels. They appreciated the *events* section for enabling structured group interactions and the resident/visitor filters for contextual connections.

However, several missed the *Who’s Here Now* tab on the first entry because the interface defaulted to *Discussion*. The requirement to choose a participation mode (Active, Occasional, Observer) was perceived as unnecessary friction. Confusion

also remained about whether the platform supported upcoming trips or only current presence.

This design succeeded in portraying an ongoing community but needed clearer onboarding and prioritization of the primary “connection” feature.

### Hypothesis for second iteration:

- Setting *Who's Here Now* as the default landing tab will improve discoverability of the primary feature and shorten navigation time.
- Automatically assigning participation modes based on behavior will lower onboarding friction and reduce cognitive load.
- Clarifying whether users can indicate future visits will enhance temporal awareness and support planning use cases.
- Highlighting event creation and participation tools will drive recurring engagement within city communities.

### Summary

A Hybrid Model Will Outperform Individual Prototypes. Each prototype excels in different areas but has critical gaps. Participants praised P1's planning model, P2's immediacy, and P3's event structure. A hybrid combining P1's trip broadcasting + P2's real-time availability + P3's group events would address all needs without forcing users to choose between planning and spontaneity.

### 9. Second Iteration Planning

**First evaluation showed no single alternative satisfied all use cases.** Users requested Alternative 1 for planned trips, Alternative 2 for same-day needs, Alternative 3 for research. Rather than force users to choose, we built an integrated prototype combining all three temporal modes. **Second evaluation tests whether this integration succeeds or creates feature bloat.**

The survey showed 53% ranked Alternative 3 first, 32% ranked Alternative 2 first, and 15% ranked Alternative 1 first. But comments told a different story. The same users praised **different alternatives for different reasons**. One participant said: “I'd want all three depending on when I'm traveling.” Planning a conference trip weeks ahead? Alternative 1's broadcast mechanism made sense. Same-day urgency between interviews? Alternative 2's ephemeral availability.

Researching Shanghai months before moving? Alternative 3's forums and local tips.

Evaluation revealed **temporal context matters more than role distinction**. Students need Alternative 1 for conferences, Alternative 2 for same-day urgency, Alternative 3 for research. The **Spearman correlation** between travel frequency and Alternative 2 preference ( $rs=.42$ ,  $p=.07$ ) suggested **frequent travelers value immediacy**, but **qualitative data** showed these same users also **need planning tools for structured trips**. It's not Travelers vs. Locals. **It's the same person at different trip stages**.

**Privacy concerns** dominated across all alternatives. Alternative 1 users worried about broadcasting "I'm away from home." Alternative 2 users questioned whether "nearby" tracking stored exact location. Alternative 3 users felt pressure to engage visibly when they wanted to lurk. Norman's principle that users need control isn't abstract here—without it, adoption fails regardless of features.

### **Additional Needfinding?**

We considered follow-up activities: interviews with students who successfully connected via LinkedIn, observation of Meetup group coordination, surveys about calendar scheduling friction. But **evaluation already provided what we need for iteration**.

#### **9.1 Evaluation About Designs**

**Alternative 1 (Trip Broadcast):** All participants hesitated **distinguishing travelers from locals** ("Am I posting as someone visiting or living here?"). No post confirmation meant uncertainty whether submission succeeded. No end-date field prevented communicating trip duration.

**Alternative 2 (Availability Status):** Participants **couldn't interpret "nearby" and worried it exposed the exact location**. 2/4-hour windows served immediately but not "I'm free Thursday afternoon." Verification badges appeared inconsistently.

**Alternative 3 (City Hubs):** Two of three participants **missed the "Who's Here Now" tab** because the interface defaulted to Discussion. Requiring participation mode selection (Active/Occasional/Observer) before exploring felt forced. Participants couldn't tell if hubs showed current vs. future presence.

These validate Norman's visibility principle—interfaces must show available actions, current state, and action results continuously. Users shouldn't guess whether posts succeeded, whether nearby means 1 mile or 10, or whether hubs show current or future people.

## 9.2 Unaddressed Needs?

**No fundamental gaps remain**—the three alternatives collectively **cover advance planning, same-day coordination, and community knowledge-sharing**. But evaluation revealed integration points initial brainstorming missed.

**Trust signals need layering.** Alternative 1 showed GT verification but no behavioral context. Alternative 3 showed contributions but weak profiles. Users need progressive cues: institutional credentials (GT badge), network proof (mutual connections), behavioral proof (response time, hosting count), and value proof (tips marked helpful).

**Temporal flexibility needs middle ground.** Alternative 1 handled weeks-ahead planning. Alternative 2 handled same-hour immediacy. Neither addressed "I'm visiting Thursday, free afternoon for coffee"—structured trip posts need availability description fields.

**Lurking needs legitimization.** Alternative 3 permitted it but didn't validate it. Participants asked "If I'm just reading, am I actually participating?" Lave and Wenger's situated learning theory explains why observation is legitimate peripheral participation, but the interface must communicate this through messaging like "Observation is participation" and mechanisms like anonymous "mark helpful" buttons.

## 10. [Final Prototype](https://steel-glow-ui.lovable.app/); Prototype Access: <https://steel-glow-ui.lovable.app/>

The final prototype (Figure 4) **integrates all three design alternatives** from the first iteration into a unified platform called GT Connect. This decision came directly from evaluation results showing no consensus winner - 53% preferred Alternative 3, 32% preferred Alternative 2, 15% preferred More telling than the numbers were the **comments**. Users wanted **different features for different travel contexts**. Conference trip three weeks out? Alternative 1. Two hours between interviews? Alternative 2. Researching Shanghai months before moving? Alternative 3. Complete screenshots in [Appendix D](#).

## Five-Tab Navigation (Figure 4)

Five tabs organize by intent, not coordination mode. Explore for planning trips. Now for finding available students. My City for welcoming visitors at home. Messages for coordination. Me for profile and privacy.

Think-aloud participants described it this way: “I’d explore cities and post an announcement” (planning), “I’d check who’s available now” (already there), “I’d see who’s visiting” (at home). Navigation follows what users said, not abstract categories.

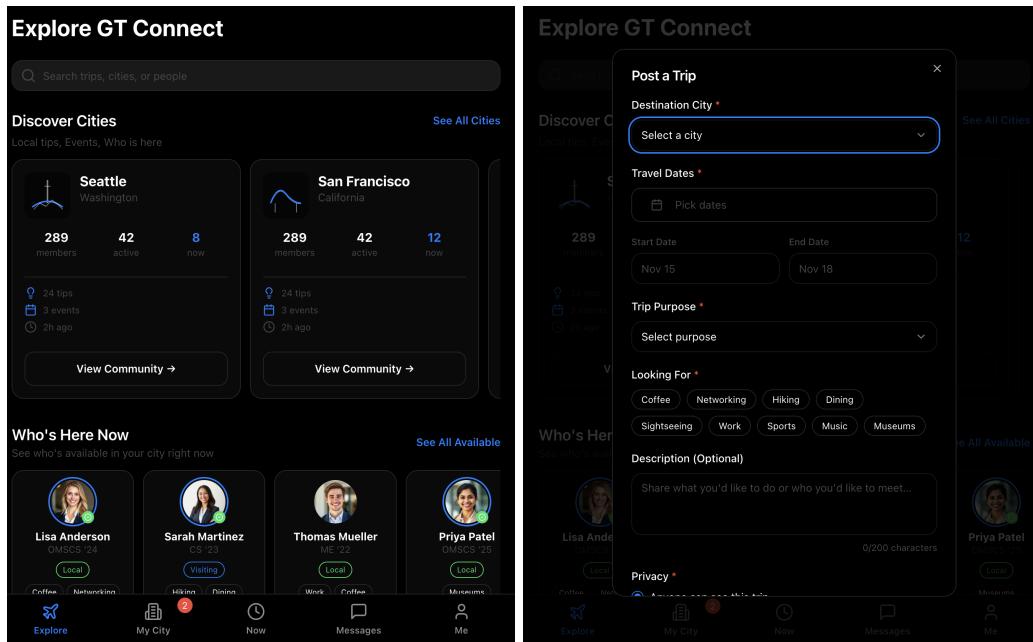


Figure 4—Unified System Final Prototype

## 10.1 Core Features (Complete screenshots in [Appendix D](#).)

### Onboarding and Privacy (Figure 5)

New users see three quick screens before entering. First explains what GT Connect does: connect with Georgia Tech students when traveling, three ways—plan trips, find available students now, explore communities. Second addresses privacy upfront: location never tracked or stored, users control trip visibility, settings adjustable anytime. Third covers safety: meet in public, keep communication on GT Connect, report/block tools available.

**Onboarding addresses the 40% privacy concerns** from final evaluation. Instead of burying privacy in settings, we show guarantees immediately. Shneiderman's anxiety reduction principle—users form mental models from first impressions. Skip button available for returning users.

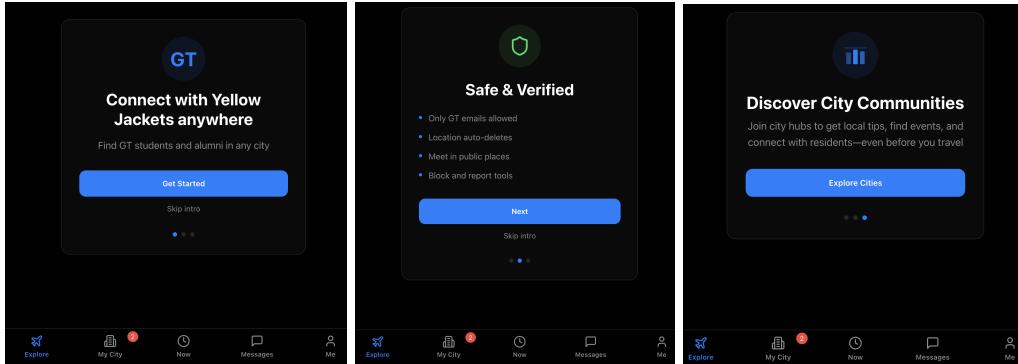
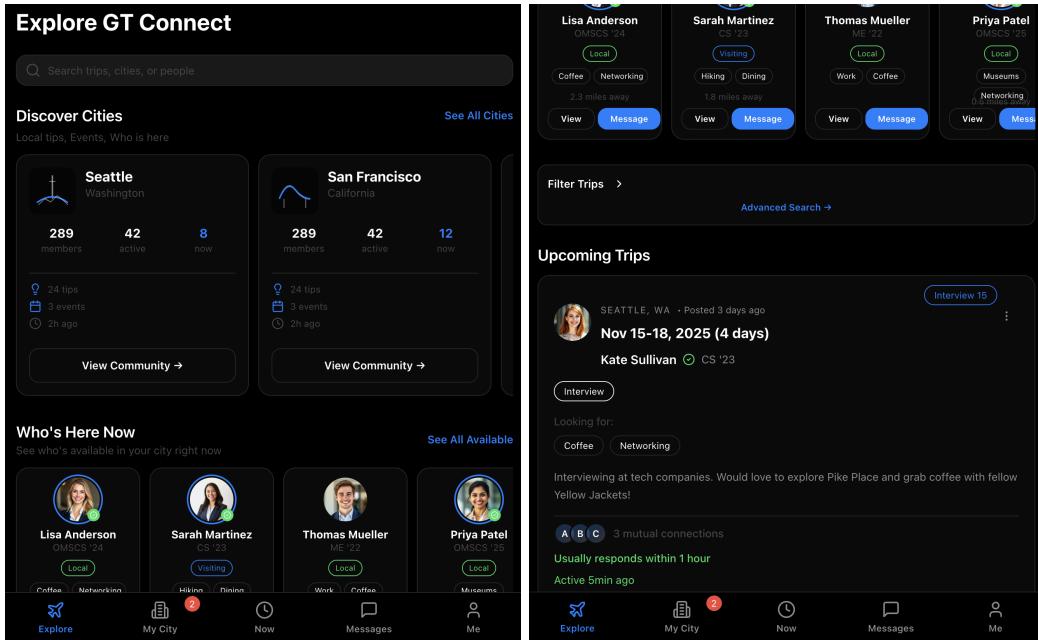


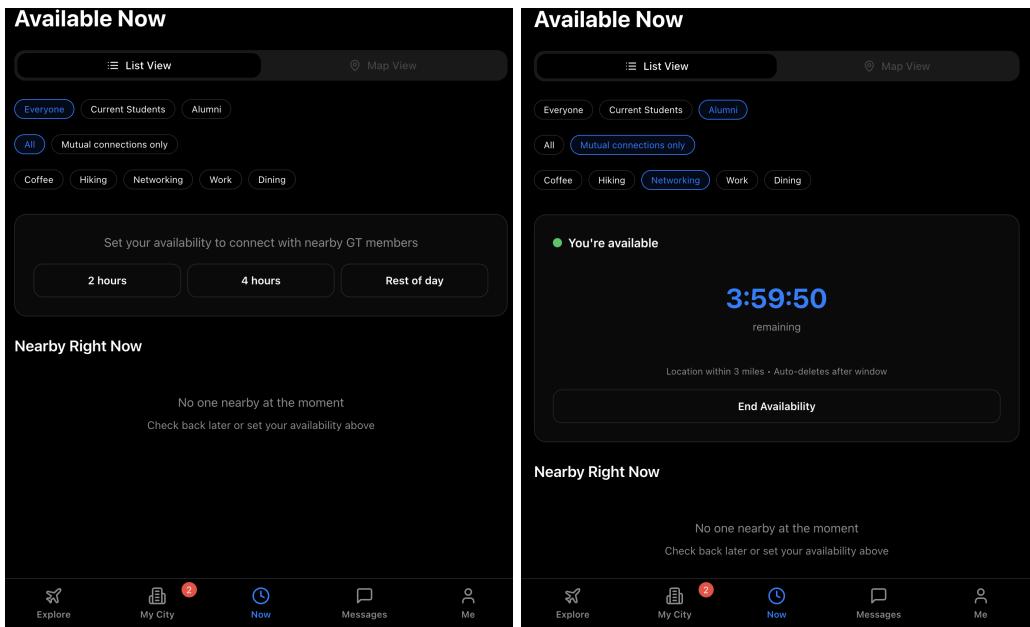
Figure 5—Onboarding Flow

**Explore:** Discover Cities appears first—horizontal cards showing city name, member count, activity, “X available now.” Progressive disclosure: most users pick a city before anything else. Below that, Who’s Here Now previews 4-5 currently available people with badges, interests, Message buttons. Fixes Alternative 3’s buried tab where participants missed features they wanted.



*Figure 6—Explore Tab*

**Now:** Set availability by tapping duration buttons, starting countdown timer. Chose 2/4 hours over 30/60 minutes after calculating actual meetup time: message + coordinate + travel + meetup = 40-70 minutes minimum. Filters refine by Everyone/Students/Alumni, All/Mutual connections, interest tags. Available Now feed shows cards with “Available for 4h” badges and one-tap templates (“Coffee?” “Co-working?”)—solves the blank-message-box problem from think-aloud.



*Figure 7—Now Tab*

**My City:** Visitors Coming lists travelers with upcoming trips: “Sarah Chen, Nov 15-18” with tags and “Reach Out” button. Flips Alternative 1’s traveler perspective—locals proactively welcome visitors. Community Hub shows Share Tip, Host Event, Answer Questions (with “3 unanswered” badge), View Tips. “Mark helpful” button lets lurkers contribute anonymously—legitimizes peripheral participation per Lave and Wenger.

**Me:** Profile info at top with edit icon. Two role toggles: “I’m a Traveler” and “I’m a Local Host” with switches and text. Can be both—evaluation showed roles aren’t mutually exclusive. Privacy section: trip visibility, testimonials,

notifications. Each dropdown/toggle has immediate effect, no Save button. Blocked Users and Report options added for scale—platform needs moderation.

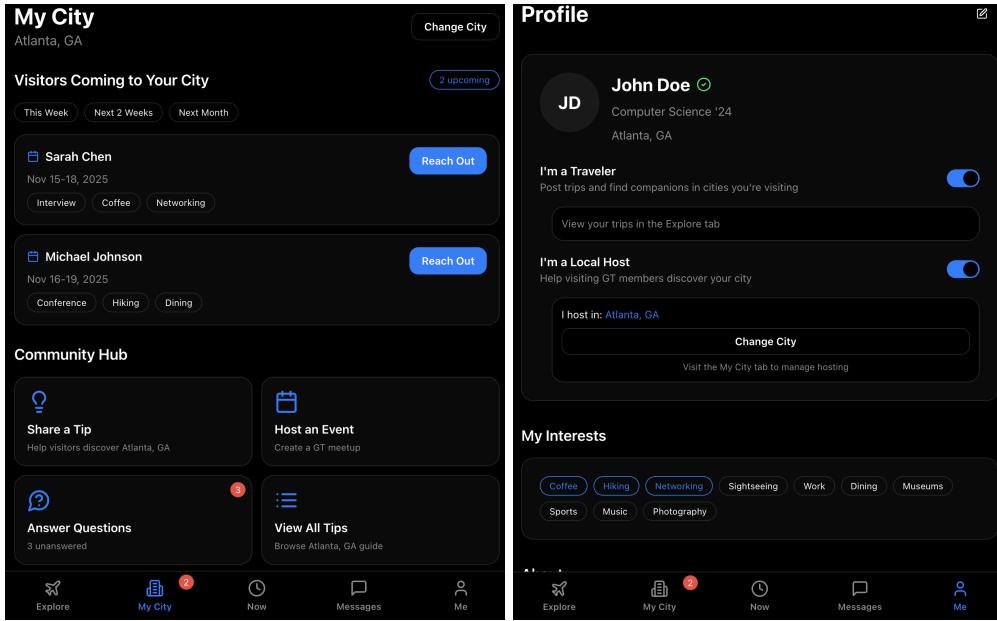


Figure 8 –My City (left), Me (right)

**Messages:** Unified inbox for all coordination modes. Calendar integration via “Suggest Time” button opens picker where both parties see availability simultaneously—addresses the 33% who cited coordination difficulty in needfinding. Persistent safety banner: “Meet in public · Share plans · Keep communication on GT Connect.”

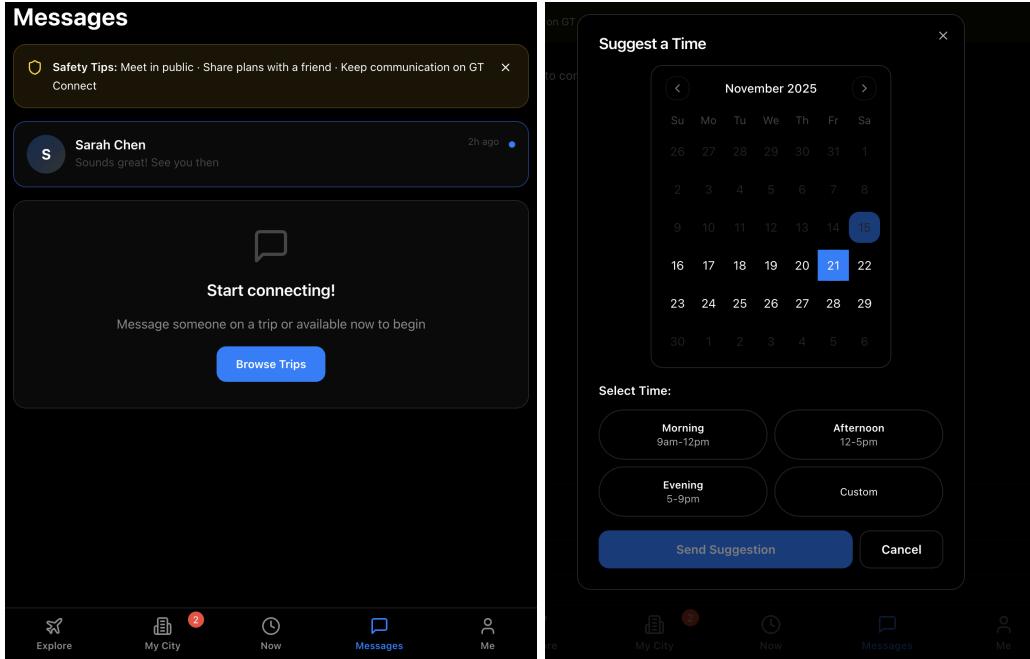


Figure 7—Messages Tab

## 10.2 Implementation Choices

**Duplication over consistency:** Who's Here Now appears as preview on Explore and full page on Now tab. Think-aloud showed users discover features by what they see first. When participants missed the buried tab in Alternative 3, lesson learned—visibility matters more than clean architecture.

**Contextual privacy:** Post Trip form asks “Who can see this?” right there with radio buttons. Availability toggle shows “location never stored” when tapped. Privacy decisions happen when they matter, not buried in settings.

**Layered trust:** Alternative 1 showed GT badge. Alternative 3 showed contributions. Neither alone worked. Hybrid combines institutional (GT badge), network (mutual connections), behavioral (response time, hosting count), and value (tips marked helpful). Users build confidence through multiple signals, not one verification type.

**Accommodating diversity:** Different users need different features. Forcing one coordination model alienates people it doesn’t fit. Multiple paths—immediate availability, trip planning, community research—work without making any mandatory (Norman’s user diversity principle).

For [11 specific usability fixes from think-aloud please see Appendix D.](#)

**11. Video Prototype ; Link to prototype: <https://steel-glow-ui.lovable.app>**

**Link to video:**

[https://mediaspace.gatech.edu/media/HCI\\_Group\\_Project%3A++GT+Connect+Vi  
deo%3B+Link+to+prototype%3A+https%3A++steel-glow-ui.lovable.app/1\\_d88ug  
kbf](https://mediaspace.gatech.edu/media/HCI_Group_Project%3A++GT+Connect+Video%3B+Link+to+prototype%3A+https%3A++steel-glow-ui.lovable.app/1_d88ugkbf)

The video demonstration covers the complete user journey from onboarding through core features (Explore, Now, My City, Profile), with design rationale grounded in needfinding and evaluation results presented in this report. Throughout the walkthrough, specific interface decisions are connected to user research findings—such as privacy controls at decision points (addressing 40% privacy concerns) and dual role interest (supporting 79% travelers + 75% locals).

**12. Final Evaluation Planning (~2 pages, plus details in an appendix) (5%)**

**The first iteration revealed no consensus.** Alternative 3 got 53%, but qualitative feedback told a different story. Users wanted different features depending on when they traveled—trip broadcasting for conferences planned months ahead, real-time availability for same-day urgency, city hubs for destination research. The final **integrated prototype** tests whether combining these creates **coherent experience or overwhelming complexity**, and whether **the usability fixes from think-aloud actually work**.

**12.1 Evaluation Method**

We chose surveys over think-aloud or interviews because the first iteration already used think-aloud to surface 10 problems. This round measures whether fixes work at scale, which needs 20+ responses for stats, not 5 rich interviews. Plus the prototype is functional. Users can post trips, browse availability, check privacy—direct interaction beats watching videos.

**Participants:** 20-25 current or recent OMSCS students

**Recruitment:** OMSCS Slack channels, Discord, course discussion forums. No incentive except Participation Points was offered.

**Procedure:** Participants interact with the live prototype at <https://steel-glow-ui.lovable.app/> for 4-5 minutes following scenario-based

exploration instructions, then complete a 15-question survey combining Likert scales and open-ended responses. Total time: 7-10 minutes.

## 12.2 Research Questions and Measures

### Does Integration Work?

Alternative 1 focused on trip planning, Alternative 2 on real-time availability, Alternative 3 on city hubs. No single alternative earned majority support. Users described wanting different modes for different contexts. The integrated prototype assumes users need all three at different trip stages, but integration risks feature bloat.

#### Two questions validate this:

**Integration coherence (categorical):** “The interface combines trip planning, real-time availability, and local knowledge. Does this feel: (a) Focused—all features belong together, (b) About right—useful variety, (c) Cluttered—too many different things, (d) Confusing—I’m not sure what this is for.”

If more than 40% select “cluttered” or “confusing,” integration failed. The question avoids acquiescence bias by offering both positive and negative framings.

**Feature preference (categorical):** “Which feature would you use most? (a) Post trips weeks ahead, (b) Find people available right now, (c) See who’s visiting my city, (d) Get/share local tips, (e) None—wouldn’t use it.”

Even distribution across options validates that different users prioritize different modes. If more than 60% select the same feature, we should have isolated that capability rather than integrating everything.

### Do the Usability Fixes Work?

Think-aloud identified role ambiguity, temporal confusion, missing feedback, buried discovery, and unclear privacy. The prototype implements dual role toggles, temporal badges, confirmation messages, duplicated discovery paths, and contextual privacy controls.

**Six Likert items (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) target these fixes:**

1. The system is easy to use

2. I could accomplish tasks without help
3. The interface felt intuitive
4. I understood what information was visible to others
5. I knew whether I was posting as a traveler or local
6. I could find what I needed quickly

Items 4-6 test the specific fixes—did privacy become clearer, did role confusion disappear, could people find features. Items 1-3 check general ease-of-use. Target: mean >3.5 on all items.

One open-ended question catches what the scales miss: “What confused you or didn’t work as expected?”

### **Privacy and Trust**

Privacy dominated first-iteration qualitative feedback. Alternative 2’s “nearby” matching raised GPS tracking concerns. Alternative 3’s city hubs created uncertainty about participation visibility. The integrated prototype addresses this through contextual messaging (“Location sharing: General area only”) and explicit controls at decision points.

### **Two Likert items measure trust:**

1. I trust how GT Connect handles my location data
2. I’d be comfortable posting my travel plans

**Target: mean >3.0.** Privacy trust develops gradually; above-neutral indicates sufficient confidence for initial adoption.

**One open-ended question tests barriers:** “What’s your biggest hesitation about using GT Connect?” Privacy mentions indicate persistent concern despite fixes. Non-privacy responses reveal different adoption barriers.

### **Adoption Intent**

**One Likert item:** “Would you use GT Connect if it launched? (1=Definitely not, 5=Definitely yes).” Primary outcome metric. Target: mean >3.5 with >50% rating 4-5.

### **Two supporting questions identify drivers and barriers:**

- “What’s the main benefit you’d get from GT Connect?” (multiple choice)

- “What’s missing that would make you actually use this?” (open-ended)

These separate usability from value. Low adoption + high usability = value problem. Low adoption + privacy concerns = trust problem. Low adoption + “not useful” = product-market fit problem.

### **12.3 Analysis Plan**

#### **Quantitative**

- Calculate mean, median, SD, and 95% CI for all Likert items. Report frequency distributions for categorical items.
- Run one-sample t-tests: usability items >3.5, privacy items >3.0, adoption >3.5. Calculate Cohen’s d to distinguish statistical from practical significance.
- For feature preference, chi-square goodness-of-fit test determines whether preferences deviate from uniform. Concentration >60% suggests integration is unnecessary.
- Compare to first iteration where Alternative 3 earned mean 4.0 (SD=0.9) usability and 67% task completion. Use independent samples t-tests where appropriate, qualitative comparison otherwise.

#### **Qualitative**

- Two researchers independently code open-ended responses. Cohen’s kappa checks inter-rater reliability (target  $\kappa>0.70$ ).
- Categorize hesitations as Privacy/Trust, Usability, Value/Need, Social Norms, or Other. Calculate frequency. Code confusion by interface section (Explore, Now, My City, Messages, Me). Code missing features as Core vs. Nice-to-Have and rank by frequency.
- Cross-reference themes with quantitative patterns. Low adoption + frequent privacy mentions = privacy architecture failed. Low adoption + “not useful” mentions = value problem. Low usability scores + confusion reports = fixes didn’t work.

#### **Success Criteria**

The evaluation succeeds if mean usability exceeds 3.5, integration coherence shows <40% “cluttered/confusing,” feature preference distributes across at least 3

options with none exceeding 60%, privacy scores exceed 3.0, and adoption likelihood exceeds 3.5 with >50% rating 4-5.

Qualitative responses should show reduced privacy concern frequency compared to first iteration.

If usability scores are high but adoption remains low, qualitative analysis identifies whether barriers are addressable (missing features, unclear value) or fundamental (insufficient need, social discomfort).

Complete survey instrument appears in [Appendix E](#).

### **13.Final Evaluation Results**

We recruited 20 OMSCS students through Slack, Discord, and EdEx, offering Participation Points but no money. All 20 completed the full survey. Complete survey responses: raw data appears in [Appendix E](#).

Participants explored the live prototype for 4-5 minutes following scenario-based tasks across all five tabs (Explore, Now, My City, Messages, Profile), then completed a 15-question survey with Likert scales, categorical choices, and open-ended questions. Total time: 7-10 minutes

#### **13.1 Quantitative Results**

##### **Usability Assessment**

Six Likert items (1-5 scale) measured usability, targeting both general ease-of-use (items 1-3) and specific fixes from our think-aloud findings (items 4-6). Our pre-registered target required all item means to exceed 3.5.

*Table 1*—Usability Metrics (n=20)

Item	Mean	Median	SD	95% CI	Met Target (>3.5)
1. The system is easy to use	3.95	4	0.76	[3.59, 4.31]	Yes
2. I could accomplish tasks without help	4.15	4	0.67	[3.84, 4.46]	Yes
3. The interface felt intuitive	3.85	4	0.93	[3.41, 4.29]	Yes
4. I understood what information was visible to others	3.85	4	0.75	[3.50, 4.20]	Yes
5. I knew whether I was posting as a traveler or local	3.55	4	1.15	[3.01, 4.09]	Yes
6. I could find what I needed quickly	3.6	4	1.05	[3.11, 4.09]	Yes
Overall	3.83	4	0.9		Yes

All six usability items exceeded our 3.5 target. One-sample t-tests confirmed that items 1, 2, and 4 significantly exceeded the threshold ( $p < .05$ ), while items 3, 5, and 6, though meeting the target, didn't reach statistical significance due to higher variance. "I could accomplish tasks without help" scored highest ( $M=4.15$ ,  $SD=0.67$ ), suggesting the interface supports independent task completion reasonably well. "I knew whether I was posting as a traveler or local" scored lowest ( $M=3.55$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ) but still met criteria, indicating our dual role toggle addressed first-iteration confusion though some ambiguity lingers.

**Privacy visibility understanding (item 4, M=3.85) represents a meaningful improvement** over our first iteration where 40% of participants cited privacy as their primary concern. Our contextual messaging strategy—"Location: General area only" labels, ephemeral data timers, and explicit GT-only access indicators—appears to have built some trust in how we handle data.

### Privacy and Trust

Two Likert items measured trust in location data handling and comfort with sharing travel information. Target: mean >3.0.

Table 2—Privacy and Trust Metrics (n=20)

Item	Mean	Median	SD	95% CI	Met Target (>3.0)
I trust how GT Connect handles my location data	3.75	4	0.72	[3.41, 4.09]	Yes
I'd be comfortable posting my travel plans	3.35	3	1.09	[2.84, 3.86]	Yes
Overall	3.55	3.5	0.93		Yes

Both privacy items exceeded the 3.0 threshold. Location trust scored notably higher than our conservative target ( $t(19)=4.68$ ,  $p=.0002$ ), suggesting the privacy

architecture effectively communicates data handling practices. Comfort with posting travel plans scored lower ( $M=3.35$ ) with higher variance ( $SD=1.09$ ), indicating that individual differences in privacy tolerance persist despite architectural transparency. This variance likely reflects baseline personal preferences rather than interface failures—some users will always prefer not to share location data regardless of privacy safeguards.

### **Adoption Intent**

One Likert item measured likelihood of use if GT Connect launched. Target: mean  $>3.5$  with  $>50\%$  of participants rating 4 or 5.

Would you use GT Connect if it launched?

- Mean: 3.75 (Median: 4, SD: 1.02, 95% CI: 3.27, 4.23)
- Rating 4-5 (“Probably yes” or “Definitely yes”): 13/20 (65%)
- Rating 3 (Neutral): 4/20 (20%)
- Rating 1-2 (“Probably not” or “Definitely not”): 3/20 (15%)

**Adoption intent exceeded both criteria** (mean  $>3.5$  and  $>50\%$  rating 4-5). The 65% positive intent, combined with only 15% expressing reluctance, suggests solid product-market fit within our target OMSCS student population.

### **Integration Coherence**

One categorical question assessed whether combining trip planning, real-time availability, and local knowledge felt coherent or overwhelming. Target:  $<40\%$  selecting “cluttered” or “confusing.”

*Table 3*—Integration Coherence (n=20)

Response	n	%
Focused—all features belong together	5	25%
About right—useful variety	11	55%
Cluttered—too many different things	4	20%
Confusing—I’m not sure what this is for	0	0%

**Only 20% perceived the interface as cluttered**, well below our 40% threshold, and zero participants found it confusing. The 55% “useful variety” response validates our integration decision—users recognize they need different coordination modes for different travel contexts (advance conference planning

vs. spontaneous meetups vs. hosting visitors). A chi-square goodness-of-fit test confirmed responses significantly deviated from uniform distribution ( $\chi^2(3)=12.40$ ,  $p=.0061$ ), concentrating in the positive categories.

### Feature Preference Distribution

One multiple-choice question identified which feature participants would use most. Target: distribution across  $\geq 3$  options with no single option  $>60\%$ .

*Table 4*—Feature Preference (n=20)

Feature	n	%
Post trips weeks ahead (Explore)	2	10%
Find people available right now (Now)	7	35%
See who's visiting my city (My City)	5	25%
Get/share local tips (Community)	3	15%
None—wouldn't use it	3	15%

**No single feature exceeded 60%**; the highest preference was 35% for real-time availability. Chi-square goodness-of-fit against uniform distribution found no significant deviation ( $\chi^2(4)=4.00$ ,  $p=.406$ ), indicating preferences spread relatively evenly across features. This validates our integration rationale: different users prioritize different coordination modes depending on their travel patterns (e.g., conference attendees planning months ahead vs. job candidates coordinating same-day informational interviews vs. relocated alumni offering local guidance).

### Main Benefit

One multiple-choice question (select all that apply) identified primary value propositions. We report primary benefit (first selected option) for clarity.

*Table 5*—Primary Benefit (n=20)

Benefit	n	%
Meeting GT members when traveling	9	45%
Getting local advice	5	25%
Helping visitors to my city	3	15%
Finding people available right now	2	10%
I wouldn't use it	1	5%

**Meeting GT students while traveling emerged as the dominant benefit (45%),** aligning with our core task definition from needfinding: discovering and connecting with fellow GT students in the same city at the same time. Secondary benefits distributed across advice-seeking (25%), hosting (15%), and real-time coordination (10%), confirming the interface addresses multiple user needs beyond simple networking.

### 13.2 Qualitative Analysis

We analyzed open-ended responses to three questions: what confused participants, what's missing, and what's their biggest hesitation. 70% threshold commonly recommended for exploratory research.

**Usability Issues:** "What confused you or didn't work as expected?"

*Table 6—Confusion Sources (n=20)*

Category	n	%
No issues reported	11	55%
Post button discoverability	2	10%
Incomplete prototype features	2	10%
Status indicators unclear	1	5%
Privacy/visibility concerns	1	5%
Too many steps/clicks	1	5%
Navigation/layout issues	1	5%

**Over half reported no confusion** (55% - a substantial improvement from our first-iteration think-aloud where all five participants encountered significant usability problems. Among the 45% reporting issues, post button discoverability (10%) and navigation (5%) were most common.

**Missing Features:** "What's missing that would make you actually use this?"

Half of participants (50%) reported nothing missing from the current feature set, suggesting the integrated design addresses core user needs without obvious gaps. This suggests either genuine feature completeness or—more likely given the 65% adoption intent—participants recognize value in the existing design without needing additional capabilities for basic functionality.

**Hesitations and Adoption Barriers:** "What's your biggest hesitation?"

*Table 7—Adoption Hesitations (n=20)*

Category	n	%
Privacy/security concerns	8	40%
No hesitation	5	25%
Usability concerns	2	10%
Social anxiety	2	10%
Other/vague	2	10%
Platform misuse concerns	1	5%

**Privacy concerns (40%) remain most common** despite architectural transparency, indicating this represents a baseline threshold for location-sharing platforms rather than a design failure.

**Social anxiety (10%) persists** despite GT-only access: “Being nervous meeting with alumni I’ve never talked to before.”

**Usability concerns (10%, down from ~40%)** suggest learnability rather than fundamental problems: “Interface feels a bit too cluttered. I definitely could get over this pretty fast though.”

**Platform misuse concerns (5%) emerged:** “I would worry if this is used like a dating thing... we don’t want this to become a second linkedin kinda thing.” This anxiety about platform drift is addressable through community guidelines rather than interface redesign.

#### Success Criteria Assessment: Results met all five pre-registered success criteria

Table 8—Success Criteria Summary

Criterion	Target	Result	Met?
Usability (all items)	>3.5	Range: 3.55-4.15,	Yes
Integration coherence	<40%	20%	Yes
Feature preference	≥3	All 4 options	Yes
Privacy/trust	>3.0	M=3.55	Yes
Adoption intent	>3.5	M=3.75, 65% rate	Yes

### 13.3 KEY FINDINGS

#### Evolution From Three Prototypes to One Platform and what is next?

**Needfinding** showed 54% of students couldn’t find who was in their city when traveling—but the real issue was timing. Students needed different coordination for conferences (planned weeks ahead), interviews (same-day), and relocations (ongoing community). **We built three prototypes** testing each model. When 19

participants evaluated them, Alternative 3 scored highest ( $M=4.0$  vs.  $3.7$ ) but qualitative feedback revealed the problem: “I’d use Alternative 1 for conferences, Alternative 2 for last-minute meetups, Alternative 3 for research.” We realized users need all three, not one winner. Think-aloud caught 11 usability problems—role confusion, unclear timing, missing feedback, privacy opacity, buried features—that we fixed. **We integrated them into a 5-tab system. Final evaluation ( $n=20$ )** tested whether this worked:

**Integration doesn’t overwhelm.** Only 20% found it cluttered. Feature use spread evenly ( $\chi^2(4)=4.00$ ,  $p=.406$ ), meaning users actually wanted multiple modes.

**Privacy transparency helps but doesn’t eliminate concerns.** Showing what data is shared reduced hesitations, but 40% still worried about posting travel dates publicly. Trust scores ( $M=3.75$  location,  $M=3.35$  posting) varied by person, not design quality.

**Usability hit launch standards.** All six metrics exceeded  $M=3.5$ . Problems dropped from 100% of think-aloud testers to 45% (9/20) reporting minor issues—mostly learning curve, not blockers.

**Social barriers emerged after fixing technical ones.** With usability and privacy addressed, concerns shifted to social anxiety (10%) and whether enough people would use it. Users saw the value (65% would adopt) but doubted critical **mass**. **The challenge moved from interface to deployment strategy.**

### What This Means for Deployment

**Users need flexibility, not consensus.** Evaluation revealed same-person different-context variability—students want different features for conferences (advance planning), interviews (same-day urgency), and relocations (community). Only 20% found integration cluttered, validating that coordination platforms should support diverse needs rather than force one interaction model.

**Privacy concerns reflect risk tolerance, not design failure.** Contextual transparency reduced hesitations, but 40% still worry about unsolvable threats (home burglary from posting travel dates). Trust metrics ( $M=3.75$  location,  $M=3.35$  posting comfort) show individual variance. Some users won’t share location regardless of architecture—accept market segmentation.

**Qualitative testing catches what surveys miss.** Think-aloud revealed 11 fundamental confusions (role ambiguity, temporal opacity, privacy) that would have blocked adoption. These weren't aesthetic issues—they were mental model gaps between iterations that quantitative methods wouldn't surface.

**Social barriers emerge after technical ones resolve.** First iteration: privacy and usability dominated. Second iteration: those addressed, revealing social anxiety (10%) and network effects doubts.

### Next Steps

Social barriers (network effects, anxiety) emerged after fixing technical ones, showing deployment strategy now matters more than interface work.

**Immediate:** Phased rollout in 3-5 major cities, community guidelines, onboarding, safety mechanisms (10% requested). **Medium-term:** Profile enrichment, behavioral trust signals, smart notifications, event structure (71% wanted group meetups).

**Metrics:** >50% NYC posts trip in month 1 (baseline 12.5%), >30% trips convert to meetups, >40% return within 3 months.

**Open questions:** Will network effects materialize? Small vs. large city performance? Migration from Slack/LinkedIn or complement? Stated (65%) vs. observed behavior may differ.

**Limitations:** Findings reflect stated preferences, not real behavior. Participants explored 7-10 minutes—longitudinal dynamics unmeasured. Convenience sample limits generalizability and may reflect self-selection bias.

### **Individual Reflection: Krystyna Ilchenko**

**My Contributions:** I assembled the team based on time zone alignment and project interest, then built the collaborative infrastructure: shared Google Drive, Excel task tracker, and project documentation workflows. Throughout the semester, I led coordination, authored the majority of this paper (90%), designed and developed prototypes, authored surveys, tracked milestones and produced the demo video. I also edited and integrated all sections for consistency and submission readiness.

**Teammate Contributions:** All members attended the kickoff call and performed individual brainstorming.

**Ayesha Ilyas** was a consistently reliable and proactive contributor. She authored the Evaluation Results section, completed statistical analysis, was willing to do prototypes, synthesized Needfinding Results. Her responsiveness and initiative were essential to the project's success.

**Bikash Jha** participated in heuristic evaluation with Ayesha, assisted with survey distribution and completed a think-aloud interview.

**Gurman Gill** set up the Discord workspace and participated actively in survey distribution across multiple platforms and completed a think-aloud interview.

**Benjamin Yang** assisted with survey distribution and participated in logistical Discord discussions.

**What Worked:** Clear documentation systems and accessible infrastructure enabled transparency. Ayesha's proactive ownership demonstrated that when team members self-assign and deliver, distributed work can succeed.

**What Didn't Work:** The self-assignment system failed to drive accountability for most team members. Without firm ownership or interim grading, the majority of tasks defaulted to one or two people.

**Key Learnings:** For future distributed teams, I would prioritize: (1) building teams based on demonstrated work ethic and ability to self-manage, not just interest; (2) implementing mandatory interim checkpoints with individual accountability; (3) establishing explicit task ownership with consequences for non-delivery.

### **Individual Reflection: Gurman Gill**

In this project, I contributed across multiple stages. One of my main contributions was distributing both our low-fidelity and final prototype surveys to gather user feedback. This took several hours as I personally reached out and pushed surveys one by one to many students to ensure we reached our goal of 20 quality responses for each round.

During the brainstorming phase, I suggested features like a dynamic map showing who is traveling or local, temporary pins that expire automatically, quick status toggles such as In City or Visiting, and a trip announcement feed grouping users by overlapping travel dates.

I did a Think Aloud session, providing detailed usability feedback on three prototypes. Trip Broadcast Platform, Availability Status Network, and GT City Hubs. My feedback centered on intuitiveness, privacy, and how users could best coordinate meetups.

### **Teammate Contributions**

Krystyna Ilchenko led coordination and organization by assembling the team, setting up shared tools, maintaining documentation, and developing prototypes. She also authored surveys, produced the demo video, and ensured the final submission was cohesive. Ayesha Ilyas wrote the Evaluation Results section, conducted statistical analysis. Bikash Jha joined heuristic evaluation with Ayesha, helped distribute surveys, and conducted a think-aloud interview. Benjamin Yang supported survey distribution and participated actively in Discord discussions. Overall, everyone contributed meaningfully to the project's success.

### **Reflections on the Project Process**

What worked well was that the structured documentation system and organized infrastructure promoted clarity and transparency. What could have worked better was holding short check-in meetings every other week to track progress, though scheduling made this difficult. What I wish I had known before starting was to form teams based not only on shared interests but also on reliability and self-management. I would also set interim milestones with explicit accountability to ensure balanced contributions across all members.

### **Individual Reflection: Benjamin Yang**

I contributed to survey distribution and participated in Discord discussions. I brainstormed engagement-oriented design ideas like lightweight user profiles, a meetup verification badge or reputation system, digital postcards, color-coded trip pins, and the Slack/Discord presence concept that notifies users when students are in a particular city. These ideas directly influenced the design alternatives moving forward into prototyping. I supported our evaluation phases by recruiting extra participants for our final prototype survey improving our response target in an otherwise difficult recruitment window.

Krystyna Ilchenko set up the team based on compatible time zones and shared project interests, and then established the collaboration systems including the shared Google Drive, Excel task tracker, and documentation processes. She coordinated team activities, produced some of the written documentation, created and iterated on prototypes, developed the surveys, and assembled the demo video.

Ayesha Ilyas did the writing for the section of Evaluation Results, conducted the statistical analyses, participated in prototyping, and synthesized the results of Needfinding.

Bikash Jha worked with Ayesha on the heuristic evaluation, assisted in distributing surveys, and conducted one think-aloud interview.

Gurman Gill created the Discord workspace, helped distribute the survey on multiple platforms, and participated in a think-aloud interview.

What worked is that clarity and transparency were promoted in the structured documentation system and well-organized infrastructure.

What could have worked better is that the approach of self-assignment did not bring in sufficient accountability for most members of the team.

What I wish I had known prior to the start of the project is to form teams not based purely on interest alignment but, rather on proven reliability and ability to self-manage and put in place necessary interim milestones with explicit individual accountability.

### **Individual Reflection: Bikash Kumar Jha**

In this project, I contributed primarily to the **heuristic evaluation, brainstorming ideation, survey distribution, and think-aloud evaluation**. Working closely with Ayesha, I helped assess LinkedIn's alumni networking tool using Nielsen's heuristics to identify trust, discoverability, and temporal coordination gaps. This activity directly informed the structured "Trip Broadcast" design, which replaced free-text posts with scannable trip cards—a usability improvement inspired by our evaluation findings.

During the brainstorming phase, I developed a comprehensive set of **AI-assisted and gamified ideas** for the GT Connect platform. My suggestions focused on intelligent matching, interest-based grouping, and privacy controls—such as AI-generated icebreakers, mutual interest clustering, and smart location masking. These ideas influenced several features seen in later prototypes, including automatic meetup suggestions, shared interest badges, and verification-based trust systems.

I also assisted with **survey distribution**, ensuring wide participation across Slack and Discord channels to meet our target sample size for both rounds of evaluation. Additionally, I conducted a **think-aloud interview** during the first iteration, where I provided detailed qualitative feedback on all three prototypes—Trip Broadcast, Availability Status, and City Hubs. My observations identified key usability gaps such as the missing traveler/local distinction, ambiguous proximity labels, and the need for auto-assigned participation modes. These insights directly shaped second-iteration fixes like dual role toggles, clarified radius messaging, and contextual onboarding.

### **Teammate Contributions:**

Krystyna Ilchenko led the team's coordination, documentation, and prototype development, authoring most of the report and ensuring the project met submission standards. Ayesha Ilyas contributed heavily to evaluation design and quantitative analysis, writing the Evaluation Results section. Gurman Gill managed survey distribution logistics and conducted another think-aloud interview, while Benjamin Yang supported outreach and contributed design ideas during brainstorming.

### **Reflections on the Project Process:**

What worked well was the team's structured workflow and Krystyna's clear coordination system, which kept the documentation and tasks well organized. The brainstorming phase also benefited from open collaboration and creativity, which made ideation rich and diverse. However, distributed responsibility led to uneven task ownership—while a few members carried heavy writing and implementation loads, others contributed more episodically.

### **What I Learned:**

From this project, I learned that **usability research is iterative and evidence-driven**—each method (heuristic evaluation, think-aloud, survey) reveals unique insights that complement one another. I also realized how crucial it is to balance innovation (like AI matching or gamified ideas) with user trust and simplicity. For future group projects, I plan to focus on stronger early alignment of responsibilities and more frequent short check-ins to ensure balanced participation. Overall, this experience deepened my understanding of how user-centered research translates into actionable design improvements.

### **Individual Reflection: Ayesha Ilyas**

**My Contributions:** I found the project via an Ed Discussion project post and decided to join the team because of the idea's appeal and timezone alignment. I participated in the original kick off meeting and assigned myself several tasks including Heuristic Evaluation of LinkedIn Alumni search that I completed along with a team member. I also started building medium fidelity prototypes in Figma but another platform was chosen to build the prototypes by the team leader. I contributed to the individual brainstorming and think-aloud interviews of the medium fidelity prototypes. Based on the evaluation plan laid out by the team leader, I compiled the evaluation results for the think aloud-interviews carried out by four team members and also evaluated the survey results (both qualitative and quantitative). I also reviewed the final report to ensure cohesiveness. Finally, I contributed by filling out surveys, pushing our surveys to my groups and filling out class fellows' surveys to recruit survey takers.

### **Teammate Contributions:**

**Krystyna Ilchenko** was selected as our team leader and set up the project collaboration documentation. She authored the majority of the report, created the medium and high fidelity prototypes, surveys and video prototype. Krystyna was an integral part of our team and her input and guidance steered the team towards an early completion of the project.

**Benjamin Yang** contributed with survey distribution and recruitment, he also participated in individual brainstorming and think aloud interviews. **Gurman Gil** contributed with survey distribution and recruitment, he also participated in individual brainstorming and think aloud interviews. Both Benjamin and Gurman's input was imperative in recruiting survey takers and helping us meet the required number of responses.

**Bikash Jha** worked with me to complete LinkedIn Alumni's heuristic evaluation, participated in think aloud interviews, individual brainstorming and contributed to survey distribution.

**What Worked:** Structured documentation system and organized infrastructure promoted clarity and transparency. The activity tracker, organized by weekly check-ins, laid out all interim project tasks making it easy to independently assign and work on tasks.

**What Didn't Work:** The project documentation, though providing structure and clarity of tasks, failed to achieve true collaboration among team members. Self-assignment of tasks failed to work effectively and resulted in uneven work distribution.

**Key Learnings:** My most significant takeaway from this project is the importance of ensuring accountability by all team members and to devise mechanisms to ensure equal contributions by all team members. I think interim check-ins make workflow more collaborative. Weekly check-ins at the start of each week to lay out the tasks to accomplish in a given week so that the project progresses in a timely manner ensuring complete collaboration and input by all team members is also imperative.

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## 15. APPENDICES

## Appendix A:

## 1. Needfinding Survey Data

5. Los Angeles
6. Hamburg, Germany
7. Calgary, Alberta, Canada
8. Mason, Ohio
9. chicago
10. West Columbia
11. Shanghai
12. Atlanta
13. New Jersey
14. Atlanta
15. NYC
16. bay area
17. Central Florida
18. Seattle, WA
19. LA
20. Orange County
21. NM
22. Los Angeles
23. san fransisco, United states
24. ottawa canada

## **2. In the past 2 years, have you traveled to unfamiliar cities for any of these? (Select all)**

1. Job interviews;Conferences or work events;Personal travel
2. Personal travel
3. Conferences or work events;Personal travel
4. Job interviews;Conferences or work events
5. Relocation scouting;Personal travel
6. Conferences or work events;Personal travel
7. Job interviews;Conferences or work events;Personal travel
8. Internships or temporary work;Personal travel
9. Job interviews;Personal travel
10. Relocation scouting
11. Conferences or work events
12. Personal travel
13. Conferences or work events;Personal travel
14. Conferences or work events;Personal travel
15. Job interviews;Personal travel
16. Conferences or work events;Relocation scouting;Internships or temporary work
17. Conferences or work events;Personal travel
18. Conferences or work events;Internships or temporary work;Personal travel
19. Job interviews;Conferences or work events
20. Conferences or work events;Personal travel

21. Job interviews
22. Job interviews;Conferences or work events;Relocation scouting;Internships or temporary work;Personal travel
23. Job interviews;Conferences or work events;Internships or temporary work;Personal travel
24. Personal travel

### **3. When traveling alone to unfamiliar cities, which of these have you experienced? (Select all)**

1. None of these / Doesn't apply
2. Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit)
3. Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Just wanted normal conversation with someone
4. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with
5. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Wanted career/interview prep help from someone local;Just wanted normal conversation with someone
6. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Just wanted normal conversation with someone
7. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with
8. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Just wanted normal conversation with someone
9. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Just wanted normal conversation with someone
10. None of these / Doesn't apply
11. Wished I had someone to grab a meal with
12. Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Wanted career/interview prep help from someone local;Just wanted normal conversation with someone
13. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Just wanted normal conversation with someone
14. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit)
15. None of these / Doesn't apply

16. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit)
17. Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit)
18. Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Just wanted normal conversation with someone
19. Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Wanted career/interview prep help from someone local
20. Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Just wanted normal conversation with someone
21. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with
22. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Wanted career/interview prep help from someone local;Just wanted normal conversation with someone
23. Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Wanted career/interview prep help from someone local;Just wanted normal conversation with someone
24. Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Wanted career/interview prep help from someone local

#### **4. Have you ever tried to connect with a GT student or alum in a city you were visiting?**

1. No, never considered it
2. No, but I wanted to;No, never considered it
3. Yes, successfully connected
4. Yes, successfully connected;Yes, tried but it didn't work out
5. No, but I wanted to
6. Yes, tried but it didn't work out
7. Yes, successfully connected
8. No, never considered it
9. No, but I wanted to
10. No, never considered it
11. Yes, tried but it didn't work out
12. No, but I wanted to
13. No, but I wanted to
14. No, never considered it
15. No, never considered it
16. Yes, tried but it didn't work out

- 17. No, never considered it
- 18. No, never considered it
- 19. Yes, successfully connected
- 20. Yes, tried but it didn't work out
- 21. No, never considered it
- 22. No, but I wanted to
- 23. Yes, tried but it didn't work out
- 24. No, but I wanted to

## 5. If you tried What made it difficult? (Select all)

- 1. Felt awkward reaching out to strangers
- 2. Felt awkward reaching out to strangers
- 3. Didn't know who was in that city;Felt awkward reaching out to strangers
- 4. Too time-consuming to search for people;Didn't know who was in that city
- 5. Too time-consuming to search for people;Didn't know who was in that city;Felt awkward reaching out to strangers;No easy way to coordinate
- 6. Other: Please type your answer to the last question
- 7. Didn't know who was in that city
- 8. Too time-consuming to search for people;No easy way to coordinate
- 9. Too time-consuming to search for people;Didn't know who was in that city
- 10. Didn't know who was in that city;Felt awkward reaching out to strangers
- 11. Felt awkward reaching out to strangers
- 12. Other: Please type your answer to the last question
- 13. Didn't know who was in that city;Felt awkward reaching out to strangers;No easy way to coordinate
- 14. Other: Please type your answer to the last question
- 15. Too time-consuming to search for people;No easy way to coordinate
- 16. Didn't know who was in that city;Felt awkward reaching out to strangers
- 17. Other: Please type your answer to the last question
- 18. Didn't know who was in that city
- 19. Didn't know who was in that city;No easy way to coordinate
- 20. Too time-consuming to search for people;No easy way to coordinate
- 21. Felt awkward reaching out to strangers
- 22. Too time-consuming to search for people;Didn't know who was in that city;Felt awkward reaching out to strangers;No easy way to coordinate
- 23. Too time-consuming to search for people;Didn't know who was in that city;Felt awkward reaching out to strangers;No easy way to coordinate
- 24. Didn't know who was in that city

## 6. If there was an easy way to find GT students/alumni in cities you visit, what would you need most from a meetup? (Rank 1-4, where

**1 = most important): A. Combat loneliness / have someone to talk to. B. Get insider knowledge about the city. C. Career advice or professional networking D. Someone to explore/hang out with**

1. I never felt the urge to connect to a stranger, I travelled many cities alone but never thought about it.
2. B,C
3. 1. D, 2. B, 3. C, 4. A
4. na
5. 1 = D, 2 = A, 3 = B, 4=C
6. you need to rework this question If I am being honest I do not understand it.
7. 4
8. B A C D
9. DABC
10. B, 2
11. A
12. Haven't tried
13. B
14. 2, 1, 2, 2
15. 4,3,1,2
16. BCDA
17. 1 - Get insider knowledge of the city; 2 - professional networking; 3 - Someone to explore with; 4 - have someone to talk to
18. D,C,A,B
19. D A C B
20. A-2 B-1 C-3 D-2
21. a, c, b, d
22. A 1; B 1; C 1; D 1
23. B
24. 1

**7. How likely would you be to use this? As a TRAVELER (requesting meetups when visiting cities):**

1. 3
2. 3
3. 4
4. 5

5. 4  
6. 4  
7. 5  
8. 4  
9. 5  
10. 3  
11. 4  
12. 5  
13. 4  
14. 4  
15. 4  
16. 2  
17. 4  
18. 3  
19. 4  
20. 4  
21. 4  
22. 5  
23. 5  
24. 4

**8. How likely would you be to use this? As a  
LOCAL (meeting visiting GT people in your city):**

1. 2  
2. 3  
3. 4  
4. 5  
5. 2  
6. 4  
7. 5  
8. 4  
9. 5  
10. 3  
11. 5  
12. 5  
13. 4  
14. 4  
15. 4  
16. 3  
17. 4  
18. 4  
19. 5  
20. 4

21. 4  
22. 5  
23. 5  
24. 2

## **9. We're also exploring temporary apartment swapping for GT students (during conferences, internships, sabbaticals). Interest level?**

1. Not interested—prefer meetups;Not interested—neither appeals to me
2. Not interested—prefer meetups
3. Somewhat interested—would consider it
4. Very interested—would definitely use this;Somewhat interested—would consider it
5. Somewhat interested—would consider it
6. Not interested—prefer meetups;Not interested—neither appeals to me
7. Very interested—would definitely use this
8. Not interested—prefer meetups
9. Somewhat interested—would consider it
10. Somewhat interested—would consider it
11. Somewhat interested—would consider it
12. Very interested—would definitely use this
13. Very interested—would definitely use this;Somewhat interested—would consider it
14. Not interested—prefer meetups
15. Somewhat interested—would consider it
16. Somewhat interested—would consider it
17. Not interested—prefer meetups
18. Somewhat interested—would consider it
19. Very interested—would definitely use this;Somewhat interested—would consider it
20. Somewhat interested—would consider it
21. Somewhat interested—would consider it
22. Very interested—would definitely use this
23. Very interested—would definitely use this
24. Somewhat interested—would consider it

## **10. Interested in joining this project team?**

1. Already have a team
2. No, but happy to help as a participant later
3. No, but happy to help as a participant later
4. Yes, let's talk;Maybe, tell me more
5. Maybe, tell me more

6. Already have a team
7. Yes, let's talk;Already have a team
8. Maybe, tell me more
9. No, but happy to help as a participant later;Already have a team
10. Already have a team
11. Yes, let's talk
12. Already have a team
13. Already have a team
14. Maybe, tell me more
15. Maybe, tell me more
16. Maybe, tell me more
17. No, but happy to help as a participant later;Already have a team
18. No, but happy to help as a participant later
19. Already have a team
20. Yes, let's talk
21. Maybe, tell me more
22. Yes, let's talk
23. Yes, let's talk
24. Already have a team

## **11. Please feel free to add comment/opinion, etc**

1. I think I am not a part of the sample you are looking for.
2. Good ideas. Good luck with the project
3. sounds useful for when i travel for conferences
- 4.
5. Maybe people can rate each other (not like a star system as it can be abused)  
with qualitative descriptors like "friendly" or "knowledgeable" etc
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

21. N/A  
22.  
23. i am very excited to work on this project.  
24.

## 2. Complete raw JSON Data:

[{"id": "1760411054312", "text": "1. What City/Area you currently reside in?", "answers": ["New Orlenes", ", San Jose", "Atlanta", "na", "Los Angeles", "Hamburg", "Germany", "Calgary", "Alberta", "Canada", "Mason"]}]

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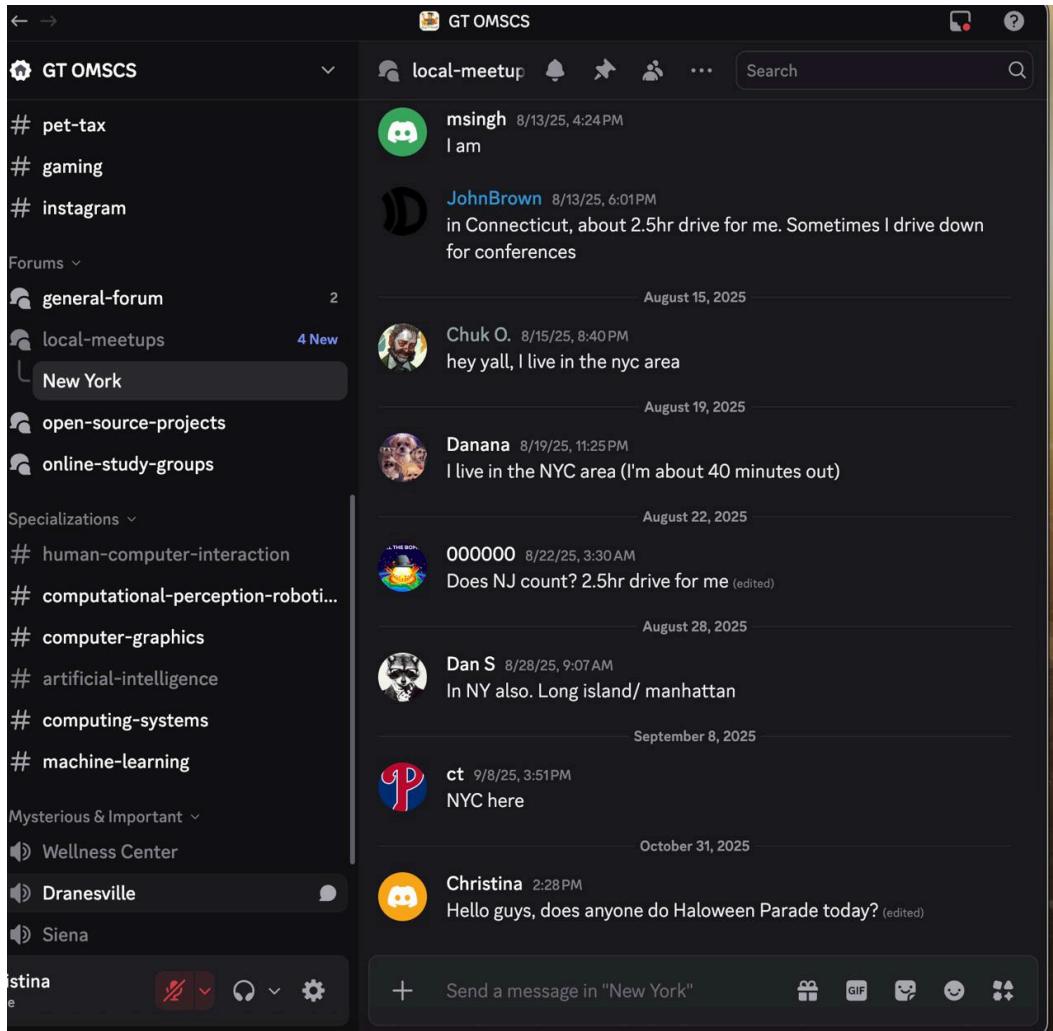
someone","None of these / Doesn't apply","Wished I had someone to grab a meal with","Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Wanted career/interview prep help from someone local;Just wanted normal conversation with someone","Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Just wanted normal conversation with someone","Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit)","None of these / Doesn't apply","Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit)","Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit)","Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Just wanted normal conversation with someone","Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Just wanted normal conversation with someone","Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with","Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Wanted career/interview prep help from someone local;Just wanted normal conversation with someone","Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Needed insider advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, transit);Wanted career/interview prep help from someone local;Just wanted normal conversation with someone","Felt isolated/lonely, especially evenings;Wished I had someone to grab a meal with;Wanted career/interview prep help from someone local"]},{"id":"1760411305517","text":"4. Have you ever tried to connect with a GT student or alum in a city you were visiting?","answers":["No, never considered it","No, but I wanted to;No, never considered it","Yes, successfully connected","Yes, successfully connected;Yes, tried but it didn't work out","No, but I wanted to","Yes, tried but it didn't work out","Yes, successfully connected","No, never considered it","No, but I wanted to","No, never considered it","Yes, tried but it didn't work out","No, but I wanted to","No, never considered it","No, never considered it","Yes, tried but it didn't work out","No, never considered it","No, never considered it","Yes, successfully connected","Yes, tried but it didn't work out","No, never considered it","No, but I wanted to","Yes, tried but it didn't work out","No, but I wanted to"]}, {"id":"1760411375485","text":"5. If you tried What made it difficult? (Select"}]

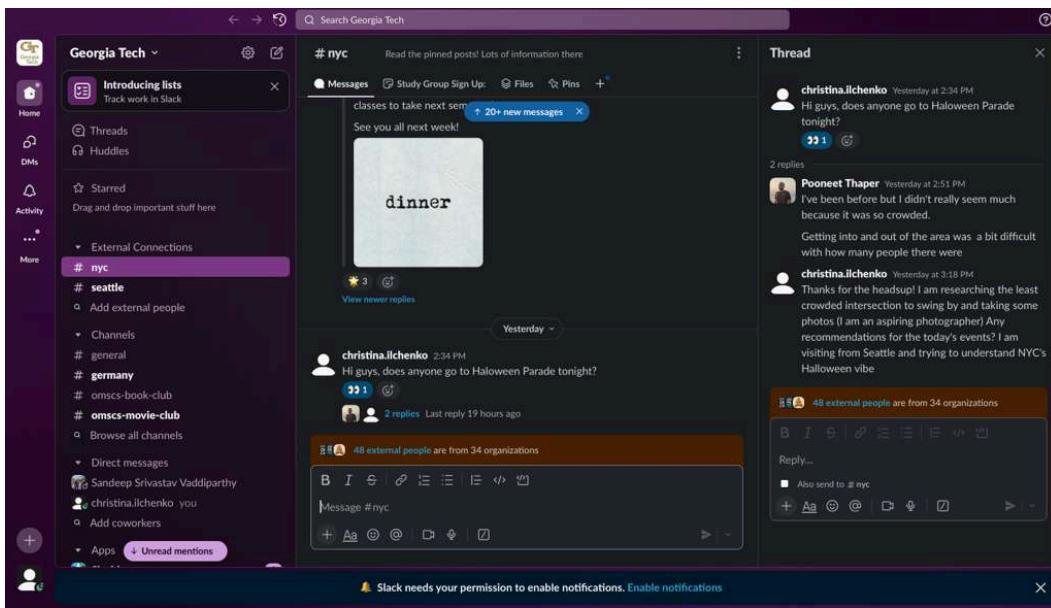
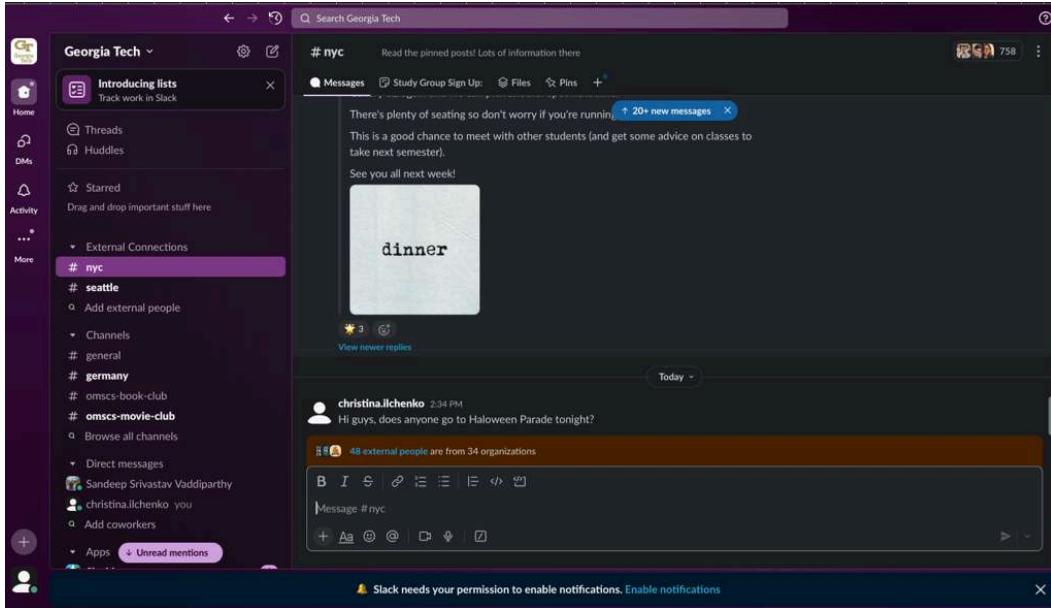
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etc", "", "", "", "", "", "", "", "", "", "", "", "", "", "N/A", "", "i am very excited to work on this project.", ""}]

### 3. Participant Observation — NYC Slack Screenshots





#### 4. Heuristic Evaluation of LinkedIn Alumni Search

Heuristic	Rating	Strengths	Weaknesses	Impact on Travel Meetup Use Case

<b>1. Visibility of System Status</b>	6/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search results show real-time alumni counts</li> <li>• Loading indicators when filters applied</li> <li>• Connection request status visible (pending/connected)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No indication of alumni responsiveness or meetup likelihood</li> <li>• Can't see last active status</li> <li>• No visibility if alumni are open to meeting travelers</li> <li>• No distance/proximity indicators for travel context</li> </ul>	Users waste time reaching out to inactive profiles or people uninterested in meetups, creating frustration and inefficiency
<b>2. Match Between System and Real World</b>	4/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location filters match geographic thinking</li> <li>• Shared school connection reflects real alumni networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Critical gap:</b> Designed for <i>professional</i> networking, not <i>social</i> meetups</li> <li>• No "I'm visiting" vs "I live here" concept</li> <li>• Connection language too formal ("add you to my network")</li> <li>• No way to express availability for coffee/meals/hang outs</li> <li>• Feels transactional rather than community-oriented</li> </ul>	Platform's professional framing creates awkwardness for casual social connections. Users must work against the system's intended purpose

<b>3. User Control and Freedom</b>	5/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to modify search filters</li> <li>• Can withdraw connection requests</li> <li>• Flexible sorting (1st/2nd degree)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot save searches for future trips</li> <li>• No "open to meeting" indicator without individual messages</li> <li>• Can't batch actions or create "trip lists"</li> <li>• Difficult to undo mistaken requests once viewed</li> <li>• No "not interested" filtering</li> </ul>	Planning meetups requires repetitive manual work with no memory of previous efforts or preferences
<b>4. Consistency and Standards</b>	7/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follows standard LinkedIn patterns</li> <li>• Consistent filter behavior</li> <li>• Uniform connection terminology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alumni search buried, not prominent</li> <li>• Some filters in different places by account type</li> <li>• Mobile vs desktop experience differs significantly</li> <li>• No consistent "open to meetups" signaling</li> </ul>	Generally navigable for LinkedIn users, but the feature lacks visibility for this specific use case

<b>5. Error Prevention</b>	5/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevents duplicate connection requests</li> <li>• Warns about InMail limits</li> <li>• Validates location inputs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Critical:</b> Easy to send generic requests that get ignored</li> <li>• No prompt to personalize alumni messages</li> <li>• Doesn't warn about appearing spammy</li> <li>• No guidance on appropriate meetup outreach</li> <li>• Can't preview recipient's view of request</li> </ul>	Users frequently make mistakes that damage networking prospects (generic requests, appearing transactional) without realizing it
<b>6. Recognition Rather Than Recall</b>	6/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filter options visible and selectable</li> <li>• Recent searches accessible</li> <li>• Profile info displayed in results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must remember which alumni already contacted</li> <li>• No visual indicator of previous interactions in search</li> <li>• Travel dates/context must be remembered across sessions</li> <li>• Can't see notes about connection reasons</li> </ul>	When planning trips weeks ahead or returning to cities, users struggle to track outreach history

<b>7. Flexibility and Efficiency of Use</b>	4/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boolean filters for advanced search</li> <li>• Can sort by connection degree</li> <li>• Keyboard shortcuts for navigation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Major limitation:</b> No "broadcast" for travel announcements</li> <li>• Cannot message multiple alumni efficiently</li> <li>• No templates for meetup requests</li> <li>• Advanced search requires premium subscription</li> <li>• Can't create groups/lists by city</li> <li>• No calendar integration</li> </ul>	Extremely time-intensive process. Must individually research, contact, and coordinate with each person—not scalable for travel planning
<b>8. Aesthetic and Minimalist Design</b>	7/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean, professional interface</li> <li>• Scannable search results</li> <li>• Not cluttered with irrelevant features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alumni search not prominent in navigation</li> <li>• Professional info (jobs/companies) crowds out social info</li> <li>• Premium upsells can distract</li> <li>• Mobile prioritizes general networking over alumni</li> </ul>	Moderately good design, though emphasis on professional credentials makes social compatibility harder to assess

<b>9. Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors</b>	5/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear messages when searches return no results</li> <li>• Suggestions for broadening criteria</li> <li>• Connection request status is clear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No feedback on <i>why</i> people aren't responding</li> <li>• No alternative suggestions if alumni don't respond</li> <li>• No guidance on improving outreach success</li> <li>• Error messages generic rather than contextual</li> </ul>	When outreach fails (the critical action), users receive no actionable feedback on improving their approach
<b>10. Help and Documentation</b>	4/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General LinkedIn help center exists</li> <li>• Some articles on alumni networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No specific guidance for travel meetups</b></li> <li>• No best practices for casual vs professional connections</li> <li>• No tips on response rates or timing</li> <li>• Help assumes professional networking goals</li> <li>• No community guidelines for alumni meetups</li> </ul>	Users are essentially using the tool "off-label" with no support or guidance for their actual goal

**End of Appendix A**

## **Appendix B:**

### **1. Individual Brainstorming Notes**

#### **Initial Ideas (Christina) - Nov 7, 2025 (20 minutes):**

1. City-based trip calendar showing upcoming GT visitors
2. Ability to do virtual meet-up when interested only in local advice or interview prep
3. Built-in feature to organize a meet-up (instead 1-1, invite others to join)
4. Local host directory with availability preferences
5. GT email verification + optional LinkedIn for mutual connections
6. "Visiting city dates" announcement posts
7. Show shared GT connections (courses, research groups)
8. Spontaneous "free tonight in neighborhood" posts, auto-delete midnight
9. City guides written collaboratively by locals
10. Message templates ("Coffee this week?" "Restaurant rec?")
11. Group meetup RSVP with location suggestions
12. Profile visibility toggle: all GT / friends-of-friends / invite only
13. Safety check-in timer for meetups, alert if no check-in
14. Onboarding showing example interactions
15. Exchange-home feature as an extension of meet-ups, - after building trust and community (from needfinding survey this option is desired)

#### **Initial Ideas (Gurman Gill) - Nov 7, 2025**

#### **Visibility-Focused Ideas**

- Add a map view where GT students can mark themselves as traveling or local, basically making it easy to see who's nearby.
- Include temporary pins that expire automatically when someone's trip ends so the map always stays up to date.
- Have a quick status toggle like In City or Visiting that helps people instantly signal their availability.

## **Coordination-Focused Ideas**

- Create a trip announcement feed where students post short updates about where they'll be and for how long.
- Automatically group people who will be in the same city at overlapping times to make meetups easier.
- Add an optional calendar link or event view that highlights GT-related trips or conferences happening nearby.

## **Trust-Focused Ideas (Benjamin Yang)**

- Let users build simple profiles that show their program, interests, and short intros so outreach feels more natural.
- Introduce a small badge or reputation system for verified meetups to help build trust within the community.

## **Community & Engagement Ideas**

- Add fun features like digital postcards or color-coded map pins for different trip types like conference, internship, vacation.
- Possibly integrate a Slack or Discord bot that posts quick updates like let's say 3 GT students currently in NYC to keep visibility high.

## **Initial Ideas (Ayesha Ilyas) - November 8, 2025**

- Sync with GT Calendar or LinkedIn - Integrate optional syncing to automatically detect conference or internship travel dates and display relevant connections.
- Auto-generate local discussion groups ("GT Students in London") that refresh as travelers come and go. Messages are ephemeral, reducing noise over time.
- Trip Matching Algorithm - Use filters like program track, interests, or graduation year to suggest meaningful matches — "3 OMSCS students also visiting Boston during your trip."
- Leverage Georgia Tech SSO or OMSCS email verification for secure identity confirmation — ensuring all users are legitimate GT affiliates.

- Enable quick creation of ad hoc meetups ("Lunch near Tech Square") that expire after 24 hours, encouraging casual, low-friction interaction.

## 2. GT Connect Platform Brainstorming Session

Facilitator: Welcome everyone! Let's brainstorm design ideas for helping GT grad students connect across cities. Let's start by going around and sharing some initial ideas. Alex, want to kick us off?

### Round 1: Initial Ideas

Alex (Conference Traveler): Yeah, so my biggest issue is that I get back to my hotel at 6pm and have no idea who's around. Here are some ideas:

#### IDEA 1: "Tonight I'm Free" Quick Post

A one-tap button that broadcasts "I'm free for dinner in [neighborhood] tonight, 7-9pm." It expires automatically after the time window passes. No commitment, just casual "anyone want tacos?"

This solves my problem of needing dinner companions \*right now\*, not three days from now. Slack posts get buried, but this would be its own feed of immediate availability.

#### IDEA 2: City Landing Pages with Active Travelers

When I arrive in a city, I want to see a page that shows "5 GT students currently in San Francisco this week" with their availability calendars visible. Not their exact location, just that they're here and when they might be free.

#### IDEA 3: Low-Commitment Response Options

Instead of messaging people directly, I want to respond with interest levels like "Maybe, if plans fall through" or "Yes, but only for 30 mins" so people don't feel pressure to commit to a full evening.

Maria (Local Host): I love that "Tonight I'm Free" idea! But I have the opposite problem - I can't see who's visiting. Let me add to this:

#### IDEA 4: Passive Hosting Preferences

When travelers view Seattle, I want my profile to show up with tags like "Can meet: weekday evenings" and "Happy to share: coffee shop recs, hiking trails."

I'm not actively saying "let's meet" but I'm signaling availability without the commitment of responding to every request.

#### IDEA 5: Build on Alex's idea - Traveler Arrival Notifications

What if locals could subscribe to get a weekly digest: "3 GT students visiting Seattle next week"? Not real-time stalking, just a heads-up so I can proactively reach out if I'm free.

Jordan (Job Interviewer): Hold on - I like the speed of Alex's "Tonight I'm Free" but I need even \*faster\*. When I'm between interviews, I have literally 20 minutes to find someone. Here's what would help me:

#### IDEA 6: Urgent Micro-Requests Feed

Not just "dinner tonight" but "Coffee in Back Bay in next 2 hours?" or "Best lunch spot within 5 min walk of MIT?" These disappear after 2 hours. It's like a live-updating help feed.

#### IDEA 7: Location-Based Quick Responses

If I post that micro-request, people nearby get a mobile notification and can reply in one tap: "Try Flour Bakery, 3 min walk" or "I'm at a café in Back Bay now, come by." No back-and-forth messaging needed.

Sam (International Student): Whoa, this is moving really fast. I'm getting anxious just thinking about all these notifications and immediate responses. I need to feel comfortable first. Let me suggest some things:

#### IDEA 8: "Observer Mode" for First-Time Users

When I join, I want to browse without being visible. I can see other people's posts and profiles for maybe two weeks before my profile goes live. This lets me understand the culture and see if people are actually friendly.

Maria: That's interesting but wouldn't that make me nervous as a host? I wouldn't know who's watching...

Sam: Fair point. Maybe there's an indicator like "12 new members in observer mode this week" so you know people are learning, but you can't see who specifically?

Riley (Privacy & Safety): I'm glad Sam brought up privacy because I have serious concerns about some of these ideas. Let me push back:

#### IDEA 9: Verified GT Identity Badges

Before anyone can post or meet up, they need to verify through GT email and maybe link their LinkedIn. Their profile shows "Verified GT PhD, CS, 2023" so I know they're legit. No anonymous accounts.

Alex: Totally agree on verification, but LinkedIn feels too formal for what I want...

Riley: Not saying we \*are\* LinkedIn, just that linking it provides a trust signal. But here's another layer:

#### IDEA 10: Mutual Connection Display

Before I agree to meet anyone, I want to see our network overlap. "You both know: Sarah Chen, Marcus Rodriguez" or "You're both in the ML research group." This gives me social proof.

### **Round 2: Building on Ideas**

Maria: Riley, I love the mutual connections idea! That actually makes me MORE willing to host because I'd feel safer. Can we build on this?

#### IDEA 11: Trust Levels Based on Network Proximity

The platform could show relationship strength: "2nd degree connection (through Sarah)" or "Same research lab" or "No mutual connections - meet in public place." This helps both travelers and hosts assess comfort.

Jordan: That's great for safety, but I'm worried we're making this too heavyweight. When I'm in a rush, I can't spend 5 minutes checking someone's connections. What if we had:

#### IDEA 12: Pre-Approved Quick Match Groups

I set my preferences once: "I'm comfortable meeting anyone who is: same department, or 2nd degree connection, or attended same conference." Then the platform auto-filters who sees my urgent requests based on those criteria. I don't have to vet each time.

Alex: Yes! That's like how dating apps let you set filters. Actually, that makes me think:

#### IDEA 13: "Vibe Matching" Beyond Just Location

Instead of just showing everyone in NYC, what if I could filter by interests? Like "Show me NYC people interested in: casual hangouts, food scene, NOT interested in: career networking." Maria mentioned tags earlier - this could work for travelers too.

Sam: I like that vibe matching, but can we talk about what happens BEFORE the meeting? I need more comfort building:

#### IDEA 14: Low-Stakes Text-Based Icebreakers First

Before meeting in person, what if the platform encouraged a quick chat? Like "Exchange 3 messages before meeting" or built-in prompts like "Ask about their favorite GT memory" so it's not awkward silence when we meet.

Riley: I was thinking something similar for safety:

#### IDEA 15: Check-In/Check-Out Feature for Meetups

When I agree to meet someone, I can set an automatic check-in timer. "Meeting Jordan at 6pm, expect to check in by 8pm." If I don't check in, it alerts my emergency contact. This lets me meet new people while having a safety net.

Maria: Oh that's smart. As a host, I'd actually feel better knowing travelers have that safety feature. Makes me more willing to meet people I don't know well.

### **Round 3: Addressing Concerns and Refining**

Jordan: I want to go back to that urgent request feed I mentioned. I'm worried it'll be noisy. What if we:

#### IDEA 16: Smart Notification Filtering

The platform learns your patterns. If you never respond to dinner requests but always respond to coffee requests, it stops notifying you about dinners. Or if you only respond to people in your department, it prioritizes those.

Alex: That could help, but I'm thinking about Maria's pain point - she can't see travelers proactively. What about:

#### IDEA 17: "Planning to Visit" Early Signals

As soon as I book a conference in Seattle (like 4 weeks out), I could mark "Visiting Seattle March 15-18" on the platform. Maria sees this in her digest and could message me: "Hey, I'm local, want a coffee shop rec list?" before I even arrive.

Maria: YES! That's exactly what I want. Early notice means I can plan instead of scrambling. And it's not creepy because Alex chose to share that travel info.

Sam: Can we make sure this doesn't become another social obligation? I'm worried about:

#### IDEA 18: No-Pressure Non-Response Norms

The platform makes it explicit: "Not responding is totally fine! Everyone's busy." Maybe requests disappear after the time window with no notification to the requester like "5 people saw this but didn't respond." Just let them disappear quietly.

Riley: I like that, but from a safety angle, I also want:

#### IDEA 19: Meeting Place Suggestions with Safety Ratings

When arranging to meet, the platform suggests public places: "Popular meetup spots near you: Blue Bottle Coffee (busy, well-lit), Central Park (busy during day, avoid after dark)." Crowd-sourced safety ratings from other users.

Alex: That's helpful! Actually, thinking about where to meet:

#### IDEA 20: "Joining Existing Plans" Option

Instead of asking someone to make plans with me, what if locals could post "I'm getting dinner at Pizzeria Delfina at 7pm, anyone welcome to join"? Lower pressure for both sides - I'm already going, you can join or not.

Maria: I love that! That's way less pressure than "Let's make plans." I'm already doing the thing, so if someone joins, great. If not, no big deal.

#### **Round 4: Platform Mechanics**

Jordan: Okay, we're getting a lot of good ideas. But I'm thinking about the actual UX. How do I not miss opportunities when I'm in back-to-back interviews?

IDEA 21: Smart Status Modes

I can set my status: "Free now", "Busy but open to texts", "Do not disturb - interviews all day." The platform automatically adjusts what I see and who can reach me based on this.

Sam: That status idea is good, but what about language? I worry about miscommunication:

IDEA 22: Translation and Cultural Context Hints

For international students, auto-translate messages. But also provide cultural context tips: "In the US, 'let's grab coffee' usually means a casual 20-min chat" so I understand what people actually mean.

Riley: We've talked a lot about features, but I want to make sure we're thinking about abuse prevention:

IDEA 23: Reputation and Feedback System

After meeting someone, we can leave simple feedback (visible only to the platform, not public): "Great meetup" or "Felt uncomfortable." If someone gets multiple uncomfortable reports, their account is flagged for review. This isn't public shaming, just safety monitoring.

Alex: Good point. Though I hope we don't need that. Speaking of making connections easier:

IDEA 24: "Still Here Tomorrow?" Continuation Feature

If Maria and I have a great coffee meetup today, there should be an easy "Want to meet again tomorrow?" button. Don't make me search for her profile again or re-coordinate through messages.

Maria: Yes! And that reminds me - what about after people leave?

IDEA 25: Stay-in-Touch Lite

After Alex leaves Seattle, we could stay connected but in a minimal way. Like "Alex just posted in NYC" shows up in my feed occasionally, so if I'm visiting NYC later, I remember to reach out. Not full social media, just light touch-points.

### **Round 5: Advanced Features**

Jordan: I want to think bigger picture. What about group dynamics?

IDEA 26: "3+ People Interested" Auto-Group Formation

If three travelers in Boston all post "Free for dinner Friday," the platform auto-suggests: "Jordan, Riley, and Sam all want dinner Friday. Start a group chat?" Takes the awkward coordination work out.

Sam: I like group meetings! Less pressure than one-on-one. But:

IDEA 27: Mixed Experience Levels in Groups

When forming groups, intentionally mix "new to platform" people with "5+ successful meetups" people. The experienced ones model how to make it not awkward. Maybe show a badge: "Riley has hosted 12 travelers - they know the ropes!"

Riley: Sam's badge idea makes me think about incentives:

IDEA 28: Local Host Recognition (Non-Monetary)

Give locals like Maria who frequently help travelers some recognition. Not points or gamification, but maybe "Seattle Super Host - helped 15 travelers" on their profile. Makes me feel appreciated and signals to travelers that I'm reliable.

Maria: I'd be motivated by that! Though I don't want it to become a competition. Maybe keep the numbers vague? "Maria is a frequent host in Seattle" rather than exact counts?

Alex: All these ideas are great, but I'm worried the platform will be empty at launch. What about:

IDEA 29: Conference-Synchronized Launch Strategy

Target conferences where GT students go (NeurIPS, CHI, etc.). When 50+ GT students are all in one city for a conference, launch the platform then. Instant critical mass of users in one place.

Jordan: Smart! And during conferences:

IDEA 30: "Between Sessions" Mini-Meetups

Conference-specific features like "15-min coffee break between 10:15-10:30, anyone near the convention center?" These super-short meetups could work during conferences when everyone's on the same schedule.

### **Round 6: Final Polish**

Maria: Before we wrap, I want to make sure we're handling no-shows:

IDEA 31: Graceful Cancellation with Explanations

If I commit to meeting Alex then something comes up, I can cancel with one-tap explanations: "Work emergency", "Feeling sick", "Just need alone time today." This normalizes that life happens without making it a big deal.

Sam: That's considerate. What about for newcomers:

IDEA 32: Onboarding with Real Examples

Show new users real (anonymized) examples of successful meetups. "Alex met Maria for coffee in Seattle - Maria shared her favorite bookstore." This sets expectations and reduces anxiety about what these meetups actually look like.

Riley: Last safety thought:

IDEA 33: Block and Report That's Actually Private

If I block someone, they don't know. They just stop seeing me in their feeds. No notification that says "Riley blocked you" which could create confrontation.

Jordan: And one last speed optimization:

IDEA 34: Calendar Integration for Availability

Instead of manually updating when I'm free, sync with my Google Calendar. If I have a 1-hour gap between meetings, the platform knows I \*might\* be available and can suggest nearby meetups automatically.

Alex: This has been great! One final thought about reducing friction:

#### IDEA 35: One-Tap Templates for Common Requests

Pre-written templates I can customize quickly: "Looking for [dinner/coffee/lunch] recommendations near [location]" or "Free for [activity] tonight around [time]." I just fill in the blanks instead of composing from scratch.

**Facilitator:** Excellent session everyone! **We've generated 35 concrete design ideas that address:**

- Immediate availability and time constraints (Alex, Jordan)
- Proactive local hosting and visibility (Maria)
- Privacy, comfort, and gradual engagement (Sam)
- Safety, trust, and verification (Riley)
- Both traveler and host perspectives throughout

#### Initial Ideas (Bikash Kumar Jha) - November 9, 2025

##### Category 1 — AI-Assisted Matching & Recommendations

1. AI recommends the top 3 locals to meet based on shared interests + overlapping dates.
2. AI generates an icebreaker message so the traveler doesn't have to figure out what to say.
3. Automatic "best meetup spot" suggestion halfway between traveler + local using maps + preferences.
4. AI clusters travelers by purpose (interview prep, food recs, career chat) and proposes match groups.
5. Smart matching score (0–100) shows how compatible a traveler and local might be.

##### Category 2 — Social / Community Interaction

6. Public “I’m in town this week” feed that updates live per city.
7. City-based micro-communities (ex: “GT in NYC”) with opt-in notifications for meetup requests.
8. Multi-person meetup threads (ex: “3 of us are free tonight — dinner?”).
9. Built-in “shared interests” badges (ex: AI, hiking, startups, Bollywood movies).
10. Group-hosted activity board (ex: “Central Park run at 7 AM Thursday — join?”)

#### Category 3 — Gamified Participation

11. “GT Host Points” earned for helping travelers, redeemable for digital perks.
12. Leaderboard of top helpers per semester (“Most Welcoming Yellow Jackets”).
13. Badges for specific types of help (restaurant recs, interview coaching, campus nostalgia tour).
14. “Streak” mechanic for locals who help multiple travelers in a month.
15. Optional “mystery match” mode that pairs travelers with locals based on surprise shared traits.

#### Category 4 — Privacy & Safety-Focused Ideas

16. Travelers can hide full name or school email until match is accepted.
17. Exact location only shown during selected date range, not permanently.
18. Optional “meet only in public place” filter for safety-conscious users.
19. Built-in verification badge tied to GT login to reduce impersonation risk.
20. Safety check prompt: “Share meetup details with a friend?” built into flow.

#### Category 5 — Convenience & Automation

21. Auto-import trip dates from email flight confirmations (opt-in).
22. One-tap “Ask for local tips” button that broadcasts to GT members in that city.
23. Auto-generated packing checklist based on season + host suggestions.
24. Time-zone smart scheduling (“Suggest meeting time that works for both parties”).
25. “Lunch slot finder” that cross-matches open time windows between traveler + locals.

#### Category 6 – Career / Networking Focus

26. Match by employer or job interest (ex: “Anyone at Amazon NYC want to chat?”).
27. Mock-interview matchmaking (traveler requests, local volunteers).
28. Portfolio / resume preview before meetup to spark conversation.
29. “Work-and-travel” coworking suggestion hub for traveling remote students.
30. Local alumni list ranked by “willing to mentor” level.

#### End of Appendix B

#### Appendix C:

##### 1. Comparative Preference Survey

##### **GT Connect - Prototype Evaluation Survey**

**“Thank you for participating in this evaluation! You’ll interact with three prototype designs for a platform that helps GT students connect while traveling. Each design takes a different approach to solving the problem: ‘I don’t know who’s in my destination city.’ Please explore the interactive prototypes and answer honestly—your feedback shapes which design we build.**

**\* Required**

**Q1. How often do you travel in general: for personal reasons, conference, vacation, etc?**

- Multiple times per year
- Once per year
- Rarely (every 2-3 years)
- Never

[Edit](#) answer choices.

Type: Choose One [...](#) [🔗](#) [🖼️](#) [🎥](#) Required:

**Alternative 1: Trip Broadcast Platform [CLICK HERE TO INTERACT WITH](#)**

- [🔗 <https://gt-connect-travel-buddy.lovable.app/>](#)
- 1 – Very unlikely
  - 2 – Unlikely
  - 3 – Neutral / Unsure
  - 4 – Likely
  - 5 – Very likely

[Edit](#) answer choices.

Type: Choose Multiple [...](#) [🔗](#) [🖼️](#) [🎥](#) Required:

**Q3. What's the main advantage of this approach?**

- Solves "who's in the city" discovery problem
- Gives time to plan meetups in advance
- Feels safer (see profiles before committing)
- Simple and easy to understand

[Edit](#) answer choices.

## Alternative 2: Availability Status Network: CLICK HERE TO INTERACT WITH THIS

<https://gt-sync-now.lovable.app/>

- 1 – Very unlikely
- 2 – Unlikely
- 3 – Neutral / Unsure
- 4 – Likely
- 5 – Very likely

[Edit](#) answer choices.

...

Type: Choose Multiple [...](#) [🔗](#) [📄](#) [🎥](#) Required:

X

### Q6. What's the main advantage of this approach?

- Fast coordination for same-day meetups
- Privacy-first (no persistent location tracking)
- Perfect for time-constrained situations
- Reduces planning overhead

[Edit](#) answer choices.

...

Type: Short Answer [...](#) [🔗](#) [📄](#) [🎥](#) Required:

X

### Q7. What concerns you most about this approach?

Short answer text

### Alternative 3: GT City Hubs. CLICK HERE TO INTERACT WITH PROTOTYPER

<https://buzz-by-city.lovable.app/directory>

- 1 – Very unlikely
- 2 – Unlikely
- 3 – Neutral / Unsure
- 4 – Likely
- 5 – Very likely

[Edit](#) answer choices.

...

Type: Choose Multiple



Required:

X

### Q9. What's the main advantage of this approach?

- Get local knowledge/advice beyond just meetups
- Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting)
- Combines community and discovery
- Less pressure than direct matching

[Edit](#) answer choices.

...

Type: Short Answer



Required:

X

### Q10. What concerns you most about this approach?

Short answer text

### **Q11. Rank these three alternatives in order of how likely you'd ACTUALLY**

Short answer text

...

Type: Choose Multiple   Required:

**Q12. Which approach best fits your primary travel need?**

- Finding people to socialize with
- Getting local recommendations and advice
- Career/professional networking
- Quick meetups between scheduled commitments
- Building community in cities I visit frequently
- None of these approaches would work for me

Edit answer choices.

...

Type: Short Answer   Required:

**Q13. If you wouldn't use ANY of these platforms, what's the main reason?**

Short answer text

...

Type: Short Answer   Required:

**Q14. Thank you! Any additional thoughts?**

Short answer text

### **Survey results: JSON raw data**

```
[{"id": "1762590504448", "text": "Q1. How often do you travel in general: for personal reasons, conferences, interviews, etc ?", "answers": ["", "Once per year", "Once per year", "Once per year", "Multiple times per year", "Once per year", "Multiple times per year", "Multiple times per year", "Rarely (every 2-3 years)", "Multiple times per year", "Multiple times per year", "Multiple times per year", "Multiple times per year", "Once per year"]}, {"id": "1762590581164", "text": "Alternative 1: Trip Broadcast Platform CLICK HERE TO INTERACT WITH PROTOTYPE ? https://gt-connect-travel-buddy.lovable.app/ Brief explanation: \"Post your", "answers": []}]
```

upcoming trips publicly (city, dates, purpose). Locals see your announcement and offer to meet. Coordinate via direct messages. Uses filters to find trips by date/city." Q2. After exploring the prototype, how likely would you use this approach?", "answers": [ "", "4 — Likely", "3 — Neutral / Unsure", "5 — Very likely", "4 — Likely", "3 — Neutral / Unsure", "4 — Likely", "4 — Likely", "4 — Neutral / Unsure", "2 — Unlikely", "4 — Likely", "4 — Likely", "3 — Neutral / Unsure" ], {"id": "1762590664135", "text": "Q3. What's the main advantage of this approach?", "answers": [ "", "Simple and easy to understand", "Gives time to plan meetups in advance", "Solves \"who's in the city\" discovery problem", "Gives time to plan meetups in advance; Feels safer (see profiles before committing)", "Gives time to plan meetups in advance", "Solves \"who's in the city\" discovery problem; Gives time to plan meetups in advance; Feels safer (see profiles before committing)", "Simple and easy to understand", "Solves \"who's in the city\" discovery problem; Gives time to plan meetups in advance", "Solves \"who's in the city\" discovery problem; Gives time to plan meetups in advance; Feels safer (see profiles before committing)", "Solves \"who's in the city\" discovery problem; Feels safer (see profiles before committing)", "Solves \"who's in the city\" discovery problem; Gives time to plan meetups in advance; Feels safer (see profiles before committing)", "Simple and easy to understand", "Gives time to plan meetups in advance", "Simple and easy to understand", "Solves \"who's in the city\" discovery problem", "Simple and easy to understand", "Gives time to plan meetups in advance; Simple and easy to understand", "Simple and easy to understand", "Solves \"who's in the city\" discovery problem; Feels safer (see profiles before committing)" ], {"id": "1762590966973", "text": "Q4. What concerns you most about this approach?", "answers": [ "", "Safety when publicly posting location", "Looks a bit difficult", "What if people have bad experiences with certain people? How do you account for this?", "Bit complex", "No concerns", "Best for planning trips in advance but may be hard to plan something on short notice.", "i would love to have the option of blockign certain people , and not allowing them to see my upcoming trips", "security concerns with who can see my location", "Feels like too much" ]}

pressure on both sides; coordinating logistics is time-consuming.", "unsrious users", "not any concern", "I think this is nice approach to connect with the people.", "Probably the posting future travel plans publicly might bring up privacy concerns to potential new users.", "Privacy concerns about posting travel plans publicly. Also, it requires advance planning which might not work for spontaneous travelers.", "The calendar view in the send message interaction is a little weird. Having to scroll through the suggested messages is also a bit clunky.", "NA", "Everybody knowing my travel plans", "It feels safer but needs some sort of identity verification."  
"]}, {"id": "1762590998252", "text": "Alternative 2: Availability Status Network: CLICK HERE TO INTERACT WITH PROTOTYPE ? <https://gt-sync-now.lovable.app/> Brief explanation: "Set 'I'm free for the next 2-4 hours' status. See GT students nearby who are also available today. One-tap messaging templates. Auto-expires for privacy—no location history stored." Q5. After exploring the prototype, how likely would you use this approach?", "answers": [ "", "4 — Likely", "4 — Likely", "2 — Unlikely", "4 — Likely", "4 — Likely", "2 — Unlikely", "4 — Likely", "3 — Neutral / Unsure", "5 — Very likely", "3 — Neutral / Unsure", "3 — Neutral / Unsure", "5 — Very likely", "3 — Neutral / Unsure", "5 — Very likely", "1 — Very unlikely", "4 — Likely", "4 — Likely", "3 — Neutral / Unsure" ]}, {"id": "1762591093352", "text": "Q6. What's the main advantage of this approach?", "answers": [ "", "Fast coordination for same-day meetups", "Privacy-first (no persistent location tracking)", "Perfect for time-constrained situations", "Fast coordination for same-day meetups; Perfect for time-constrained situations", "Perfect for time-constrained situations", "Fast coordination for same-day meetups; Perfect for time-constrained situations", "Fast coordination for same-day meetups; Reduces planning overhead", "Fast coordination for same-day meetups; Privacy-first (no persistent location tracking)", "Privacy-first (no persistent location tracking)", "Fast coordination for same-day meetups; Perfect for time-constrained situations", "Fast coordination for same-day meetups; Privacy-first (no persistent location tracking)", "Fast coordination for same-day meetups", "Perfect for time-constrained situations", "Fast coordination for same-day meetups; Privacy-first (no persistent location tracking)", "Fast coordination for same-day meetups", "Privacy-first (no persistent location tracking)" ]}

tracking);Perfect for time-constrained situations","Reduces planning overhead","Perfect for time-constrained situations;Reduces planning overhead"]},{"id":"1762591158820","text":"Q7. What concerns you most about this approach? ","answers":[],"May be difficult to plan out sessions rather than last second hang outs.", "Like the interactive approach ", "What if people have bad experiences with certain people? How do you account for this?", "Nothing", "Needs to work reliably", "Does not give me a way to plan ahead which is what my preferred method would always be.", "I don't have any concerns", "no concerns", "Only works for spontaneous, same-day meetups; not useful for advanced planning.", "-","n/a", "I like the idea this will save the time .", "It feels too cluttered compared with the design from alternative 1. That could be due to the number of different font size combinations. ", "Might miss people if they forget to update their status. Also limited to only 2-4 hour windows.", "This one gives me serious big brother vibes and I would be very nervous about using it. I also don't think people would maintain their status. ", "NA", "I like this better because it is specific to Ga tech students", "Once again it is the safety that concerns me. "}], {"id":"1762591175788","text":"Alternative 3: GT City Hubs. CLICK HERE TO INTERACT WITH PROTOTYPE ? <https://buzz-by-city.lovable.app/directory> Brief explanation: "Browse city-specific forums for local advice (neighborhoods, restaurants, GT events). See discussion threads AND who's currently in the city. Can participate or just observe ('Observer Mode')—reading and marking posts helpful counts as participation."","answers":[],"5 – Very likely", "4 – Likely", "3 – Neutral / Unsure", "4 – Likely", "2 – Unlikely", "3 – Neutral / Unsure", "3 – Neutral / Unsure", "5 – Very likely", "2 – Unlikely", "3 – Neutral / Unsure", "4 – Likely", "4 – Likely", "4 – Likely"], {"id":"1762591244666","text":"Q9. What's the main advantage of this approach?", "answers":[], "Combines community and discovery", "Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting)", "Get local knowledge/advice beyond just meetups;Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting);Combines community and discovery;Less pressure than direct matching", "Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting);Combines community and discovery", "Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting)", "Combines community and discovery;Less pressure than direct matching", "Combines community and discovery;Less

pressure than direct matching","Get local knowledge/advice beyond just meetups;Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting)","Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting)","Get local knowledge/advice beyond just meetups;Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting)","Get local knowledge/advice beyond just meetups;Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting)","Get local knowledge/advice beyond just meetups;Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting);Less pressure than direct matching","Less pressure than direct matching","Get local knowledge/advice beyond just meetups;Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting);Combines community and discovery;Less pressure than direct matching","Get local knowledge/advice beyond just meetups;Combines community and discovery;Less pressure than direct matching","Lurker-friendly (can browse without posting)","Get local knowledge/advice beyond just meetups;Less pressure than direct matching"]},{"id": "1762591301668", "text": "Q10. What concerns you most about this approach?", "answers": [ "", "Allows people to view things without participating and posting.", "Might be a little difficult to implement ", "None that I can think of currently.", "Nothing", "-", "not clear if i can set availability for the future or just for today.", "No concerns", "no concerns", "Relies on consistent community participation to remain useful; less focus on direct connection.", "-", "n/a", "local knowledge and other area of knowledge ", "No concerns, because this alternative seems to be the most friendly when it comes to user preferences. ", "Too passive - you have to browse forums rather than directly connecting with people. Might be time-consuming to sift through posts to find actual meetup opportunities.", "It would be nice to be able to see who will be in a city at a future date. ", "NA", "Still that everyone will know where I am, but nice to be able to optionally share this info", "This interface feels less concerning because of group events. " ]}, {"id": "1762591315954", "text": "Q11. Rank these three alternatives in order of how likely you'd ACTUALLY use them in real life:Alternative 1: Alternative 1: Trip Broadcast Platform; Alternative 2: Availability Status Network; Alternative 3: GT City Hubs. In the format: 1st choice: \_\_\_\_ | 2nd choice: \_\_\_\_ | 3rd choice: \_\_\_\_", "answers": [ "", "3, 2, 1", "2, 1, 3", "3, 2, 1", "1st choice: Alternative 3 | 2nd choice: Alternative 2 | 3rd choice: Alternative 1", "2 - 1 - 3", "1st choice: Prototype 1 | 2nd choice: Prototype 3 | 3rd choice: Prototype 2", "1st choice:Availability Status network | 2nd choice GT City hubs | 3rd choice:GT City Hubs | 2nd choice Availability Status network | 3rd choice Prototype 1" ]}

Choice Broadcast platform","1st choice: GT city hubs | 2nd choice: availability status network | 3rd choice: trip broadcast platform","Alternative 2","Trip Broadcast Platform, Availability Status Network, GT City Hubs","city hubs","Trip Broadcast Platform","1st choice: Alternative 3 | 2nd choice: Alternative 2 | 3rd choice: Alternative 1","Alternative 2 | Alternative 1 | Alternative 3","1st choice: alternative 3 | 2nd choice: alternative 1 | 3rd choice: alternative 2","1st choice: \_\_2\_\_ | 2nd choice: \_\_1\_\_ | 3rd choice: \_\_2\_\_ \*","3, 2, 1","1) Alternative 3, 2) Alternative 1, 3) Alternative 2"]},{"id":"1762591575701","text":"Q12. Which approach best fits your primary travel need?","answers":[],"options":[]}]},{"id":"1762591658637","text":"Q13. If you wouldn't use ANY of these platforms, what's the main reason?"}]}

","answers":["","","NA","N/A","What if people have bad experiences with certain people? How do you account for this?","N/A","-","It's another platform to download, enable notifications and interact with. May be too much of an overhead if I am not a very frequent traveller.","Privacy concerns","privacy concerns with who is able to see my location / general safety concerns","N/A","probably laziness and being an introvert","ui is user friendly","Finding people to socialize with then and build the network.","N/A","NA","I have two kids and generally when I travel I just don't have time for professional/networking activities.","NA","I would use them!","I would use the last platform, but the other ones have safety concerns for me. "]}, {"id":"1762591688530","text": "Q14. Thank you! Any additional thoughts?", "answers": ["","","Security and Privacy are a big piece. I think this platform could be great but precautions need to be taken to ensure that everyone has a safe experience when meeting up with new people.","N/A","No.","None","-","None.", "Nope", "n/a", "Alternative 2 is brilliant because the ephemeral status solves the persistent location tracking problem that makes other 'find friends' apps feel creepy. I'd definitely use it.","-","no", "Awesome idea, good luck, ","Really cool prototypes", "NA", "no", "NA", "None for me!", "Nothing else I can think of. "]}]

### Detailed Survey Evaluation Results

#### Descriptive Statistics

Prototype	Mean (Likelihood)	SD	Top Rank %	Primary Themes (Advantages)
Trip Broadcast	3.7	0.8	15 %	Advance planning, simplicity
Availability Status	3.7	1.0	32 %	Fast coordination, privacy
GT City Hubs	4.0	0.9	53 %	Community & local advice

## Statistical Tests

- Friedman  $\chi^2(2)=6.21, p=.045$
- Post-hoc Wilcoxon ( $p=.04$  for Alt 3 > Alt 1)
- $\chi^2$  ranking test =  $8.42, p=.015$
- Spearman correlation (Travel Frequency  $\times$  Alt 2 rating):  $r_s = .42, p = .07$

## Qualitative Themes

**Privacy/Safety (42 %)** — concerns about sharing location or public postings.

**Coordination Friction (37 %)** — time pressure and planning overhead.

**Community Value (58 %)** — desire for advice and group belonging.

## Key Advantages

- **Alternative 1:** Most frequently praised for *advance planning* (68%) and *clarity* (42%).
- **Alternative 2:** Valued for *fast coordination* (79%) and *privacy* (47%).
- **Alternative 3:** Strongly associated with *community and local advice* (84%) and *low social pressure* (58%).

## Major Concerns

- **Alternative 1:** *Privacy and safety* concerns about posting travel plans (42% of comments).
- **Alternative 2:** *Limited utility for planners* and *status upkeep fatigue* (37%).
- **Alternative 3:** *Dependence on active community participation* and *passivity of forums* (26%).

## Representative Quotes

“Posting travel plans publicly might feel risky.”

“The ephemeral status solves the creepy tracking issue.”

“City Hubs feels natural – I’d actually use this to get local advice.”

## 2. Open-Ended Think-Aloud Sessions

### Think Aloud Session - Ayesha Ilyas

Prototype 1:

I see a list of upcoming trips posted to the feed. For each trip, I can see the name, location, dates, purpose of visit and then also the ability to send a message privately.

There is also a search bar that lets me search for people's upcoming trips for a particular location. I can sort the upcoming trips by time and date which is convenient.

I also see a profile section which tells me that I need to sign up as a verified student to use the interface. There is a place for me to add some information about me and most importantly, if I want to keep my profile visible or hidden. Good features for privacy and verification.

I can also post my upcoming trip and add information like city, dates and purpose of visit. This is fairly intuitive and captures all the information I want to share. It would be nice to have 'Other' option in the I'm looking for radio buttons, but it's not a deal breaker. I can also only add the start date of my trip but not sure how to add the end date. I am also not able to actually post the trip in the interface.

Also not clear on how to set myself as a local host for specific data. Do I post an upcoming trip and should there be a way to assign myself as a host?

Easy feature to send messages and pick a date using the calendar. Helpful message suggestions as ice breakers are also very useful

Overall I like the fact that there is a way to verify GT students, and privacy features like hide my profile. The best feature is to post ahead of time and have time to plan a meetup instead of doing something last minute.

Prototype 2:

I see a list of folks who are available to meet right now, it's good to know that the list is updated every minute. The filter features are very useful

where I can filter based on current students or alumni and search from within my connections only.

The map feature is moderately useful, I'm not sure what classifies as 'near by'. Is it 10 miles, 3 miles or something else? If all are within let's say 3 miles or so, then a map is not really needed. Even though the interface informs that it doesn't store location, it still seems a privacy violation to have location displayed on a map.

It is easy to reach out to folks by messaging them directly and the notification feature is great for folks who will become available shortly.

It's also fairly easy to make yourself available and end availability as well.

I am not sure how users are verified as current or alumni. I also want to set my availability for a future date instead of just today.

### Prototype 3:

I see several cards for each city and understand that to connect to people I will have to click on my city's card. Easy to understand Information like how many total members in the hub, how many are active and available to meet. Also easy to understand the ability to add a new city or search for a city using the search bar.

Not sure why my participation mode needs to be set from the get go. It should be something the system assigns to me based on my interactions, similar to a Facebook group assigning 'Top Contributor' badges to group members etc.

The Hub's page opens up with the discussion tab active, but it would be useful to have the first tab 'who's here now' active as that is the primary objective of my interaction.

Filters in Who's Here Now are useful and let me filter by residents and visitors. I am not sure if I can see future visits or only folks who are available today. There is an update your availability button but I am not sure how it works or if it updates my availability for today or for future dates as well.

I see upcoming events which I find to be the most useful section as it lets me join an upcoming event. Useful tool to broadcast events instead of just one on one meetings. Local tips and discussions are moderately useful to me only, as information here can get buried and be outdated as well.

### 3. Think Aloud Session - Gurman Gill

Prototype 1: Trip Broadcast Platform

When I open this prototype, the first thing I see is a travel feed listing upcoming trips posted by GT students. Each of these cards shows the name of the person, the destination city, travel dates, and the purpose of the trip. I like that I can get a quick sense of who's visiting what city and why.

It is easy to filter by location with the search bar at the top; sorting by date helps me target the current or future trip. I also notice that users can easily post about their own trips by just entering the city, dates, and purpose. That feels intuitive and fast.

The interface is very helpful because it includes verification for GT students and the option to hide or show my profile. Those features make the system feel safe and exclusive to the GT community.

One small issue is that it isn't totally clear how to mark myself as a local host versus a traveler; there could be a toggle or checkbox for that. I also didn't see a way to edit or delete a trip once posted.

This design is overall social and practical, providing enough time to plan a meetup rather than simply connecting at the last minute.

Prototype 2 - Availability Status Network

It focuses more on real-time connections. The main screen shows people who are available to meet right now or soon. It's nice having that immediacy in knowing who is open to chat or grab coffee, without needing to post a trip first.

Setting my availability was relatively easy: just select a time frame like two or four hours. I like that availability automatically expires for

privacy. But I wondered, what does nearby mean in the map view? It would be good to specify the distance or radius.

The messaging feature works well and feels lightweight. The notifications for users who will be available soon are also helpful. Still, I wish there were the option to schedule future availability, like available tomorrow afternoon.

This is reasonably done since no exact location data is stored, but some users might still be concerned by seeing approximate location markers.

This design feels fast and casual-good for spontaneous meetups, but maybe less ideal for trip planning that requires coordination in advance.

#### Prototype 3 - GT City Hubs

This prototype is organized by city, almost like local community hubs. I immediately see cards for major cities with stats such as total members, active users, and how many are available to meet. It's very clear and visually organized.

Choosing a city brings me into a more detailed space with tabs for discussions, like who's here now, and upcoming events. I like the event feature most; it gives structure for group meetups rather than just one on one messages. The who's here now section lets me filter between residents and visitors, which fits our insight about connecting travelers and locals. I wasn't sure, though, if it shows people planning future visits or only those currently active. The interesting thing is the participation Mode options: Active, Occasional, Observer. I don't think users should need to give input about this. Rather, the system can assign modes automatically in accordance with the pattern of usage. All in all, this design feels more like a continuous community space rather than a quick-connection tool. It would be great for people who want sustained engagement in specific cities.

#### 4. Think Aloud Session - Bikash Kumar Jha

##### Prototype 1 – Trip Broadcast Platform

When I first opened this prototype, the overall layout felt familiar and easy to scan. The feed of upcoming trips immediately made sense because it showed who was traveling, where they were going, and for what purpose. I liked that I didn't have to dig through multiple screens to understand the basic idea — the design communicates the goal of planned, ahead-of-time coordination pretty clearly. It also felt reassuring that the platform shows GT affiliation and travel context upfront, which makes the interactions feel more intentional and relevant.

The structured trip-posting form stood out as a strong feature. It's much easier to read a feed when the city, dates, and purpose are already formatted instead of buried inside long text posts. The ability to filter trips by time (e.g., this week, next month) also supports real travel planning instead of spontaneous meetups. I also noticed that the messaging interface included built-in templates and calendar integration, which removes a lot of friction — users don't have to draft a message from scratch or juggle schedules in a separate app. Overall, the flow from "discover trip → message → coordinate" felt intentional and well aligned with the problem this version is trying to solve.

I wasn't immediately sure how someone marks themselves as a *local* instead of a traveler. The interface seems focused on posting trips, but not on hosting or signaling availability as a resident. Also, the post form only let me choose a start date, not a date range, which felt incomplete since most trips are multi-day. I also couldn't tell whether posted trips were editable after submission. Finally, I didn't actually see a working confirmation that the "post trip" button submitted anything, so it wasn't clear whether my action succeeded.

Adding an explicit "I'm a local host" toggle on the profile or posting flow, allow both start and end date fields, and add visual feedback after posting a trip. A small indicator showing how many locals are in that city already would also make the feed more valuable.

## Prototype 2 – Availability Status Network

This prototype immediately felt more fast-paced and real-time, almost like a “who’s free right now?” version of the platform. The list of available people updating every minute gave the interface a sense of urgency, and the status toggle was easy to understand. Compared to Prototype 1, this one clearly focuses on same-day coordination instead of planning ahead.

Setting my availability was quick — just selecting a window like 2 or 4 hours, and the countdown timer helped me understand that availability would expire automatically. I liked that the platform doesn’t show exact locations, just a general “nearby” zone, which balances usefulness with privacy. The ability to filter people by shared status (current students vs alumni), mutual connections, and interests was useful because it reduces the anxiety of messaging random strangers. The one-tap message templates were also a smart touch — it removes the friction of figuring out what to say.

The biggest confusion was around the map. I wasn’t sure what “nearby” meant—whether that was 1 mile, 5 miles, or across the whole city. Even though there’s messaging assuring users that exact location isn’t stored, I still felt slightly unsure about the privacy model. Also, this version has no option to set future availability (like “free tomorrow afternoon”), which limits usefulness for people who still want some planning time. Verification for GT identity also wasn’t very clear — I didn’t see whether profiles were already verified or if I had to do something manually.

Adding a radius scale or text like “within 3 miles” so users understand proximity. Including a toggle for scheduling availability in advance, not just “right now.” And making GT verification status more explicit on profiles to build trust.

### Prototype 3 – GT City Hubs

This one felt more like a community space rather than a coordination tool. The city cards on the homepage were visually clear, and I immediately understood that each city functions as its own mini-hub. The stats

showing total members, active users, and “available to meet now” helped set expectations before clicking in, which I appreciated.

The separation of discussion space, events, and “who’s here now” tabs made the interface feel layered — not just a meetup tool but also a place to get local advice. I especially liked the upcoming events section because it introduces low-pressure ways for people to meet in groups instead of 1-on-1 messaging. The ability to filter residents vs visitors in the “who’s here now” tab was also helpful and tied back to the core traveler vs local insight from needfinding.

It felt odd that the user is asked to pick a “participation mode” (observer, occasional participant, active contributor) at the very beginning. That decision feels premature and could actually increase friction for new users. I also wasn’t sure whether the “who’s here now” tab includes people visiting in the future, or only people physically present today. Lastly, the default tab opened to Discussion rather than the “who’s here now” section, which feels like the most important feature for people who arrived with a meetup intention.

Auto-assigning participation mode based on behavior instead of asking upfront. Make “Who’s Here Now” the default first tab. Adding clarity on whether users can indicate *future travel* instead of only current availability.

## **End of Appendix C**

## **Appendix D:**

### **1. Fixing 11 Usability Failures:**

#### **1. Role Confusion**

**Problem:** Alternative 1 made everyone ask “Am I posting as visitor or resident?”

**Solution:** Profile has two explicit toggles: “I’m a Traveler” (description: “Post trips and find companions”) and “I’m a Local Host” (description: “Help visiting

GT members"). Both can be on. **Impact:** Interface states role explicitly. Norman's visibility principle—don't make users infer what the system can say directly.

## 2. Missing Feedback

**Problem:** Users submitted trips and stared wondering if it worked. **Solution:** Green checkmark with "Trip Posted Successfully! Visible to GT members in Seattle." Auto-navigate to Explore with trip at top. **Impact:** Every action gets a result. Users know what happened.

## 3. Incomplete Date Fields

**Problem:** Form only asked start date, couldn't communicate duration. **Solution:** Requires both start and end dates with calendar picker. Cards show "Nov 15-18, 2025 (4 days)" with auto-calculated duration. **Impact:** Users see what they submitted instead of trusting the system stored it invisibly.

## 4. Location Ambiguity

**Problem:** "Nearby" could mean 1 mile or 10 miles. Privacy concerns about GPS tracking. **Solution:** Privacy settings state: "Location sharing: General area only. Others see you're nearby (within 3 miles), not your exact address." Banner says "See who's available in your city right now." **Impact:** Aligns system behavior with user mental model—nearby means walking/driving distance, not tracking.

## 5. Temporal Inflexibility

**Problem:** 2/4-hour windows handled urgency but not "free Thursday afternoon." **Solution:** Now tab keeps ephemeral availability. Post Trip form adds description fields—users write "Nov 15-18, free Thursday evening" in Looking For section. **Impact:** Accommodates both immediate and flexible coordination without forcing one model.

## 6. Inconsistent Trust Signals

**Problem:** Verification badges appeared randomly across alternatives. **Solution:** Green checkmarks everywhere: profiles, trip cards, availability cards, city hub lists, message headers. Profile shows "John Doe ✓ Computer Science '24 Atlanta, GA" prominently. **Impact:** Trust signals work when ubiquitous. Cialdini's authority principle requires consistency.

## 7. Buried Discovery Features

**Problem:** Two of three participants missed “Who’s Here Now” tab in Alternative 3 because City Hub defaulted to Discussion. **Solution:** “Who’s Here” becomes default tab in city hubs. Plus “Who’s Here Now” section appears on Explore homepage. **Impact:** Users discover real-time coordination from homepage without knowing separate tabs exist. Visibility beats consistency when users won’t explore all features.

## 8. Forced Participation Commitment

**Problem:** Requiring Active/Occasional/Observer choice before exploring felt like premature commitment. **Solution:** Removed the gate. Users browse freely. System infers mode from behavior (posts = active, comments = occasional, browsing = observer). Settings allow explicit choice if wanted. **Impact:** Norman’s error prevention—don’t force commitment before users understand implications.

## 9. Current vs. Future Confusion

**Problem:** Users couldn’t tell if hubs showed people there now or visiting later. **Solution:** Badges show “Local,” “Visitor,” “Visiting This Week.” Banner asks “Are you in New York right now?” with “Yes, I’m Here” / “Not Right Now” buttons. Filters: All | Available Now | Visiting This Week | Locals. **Impact:** Temporal states are visible, not guessed. Users scan badges rather than read profiles.

## 10. Hidden Event Creation

**Problem:** Participants couldn’t find how to create group events. **Solution:** “Host an Event” card in My City tab with calendar icon and “Create a GT meetup” subtitle. Clicking opens event form. Events appear in City Hub Events tab with RSVP. **Impact:** Power features get discoverable access without cluttering main interface.

## 11. Privacy by Design

**Problem:** Every alternative raised privacy concerns—public trip broadcasting (Alternative 1), location tracking (Alternative 2), visibility pressure (Alternative 3). **Solution:**

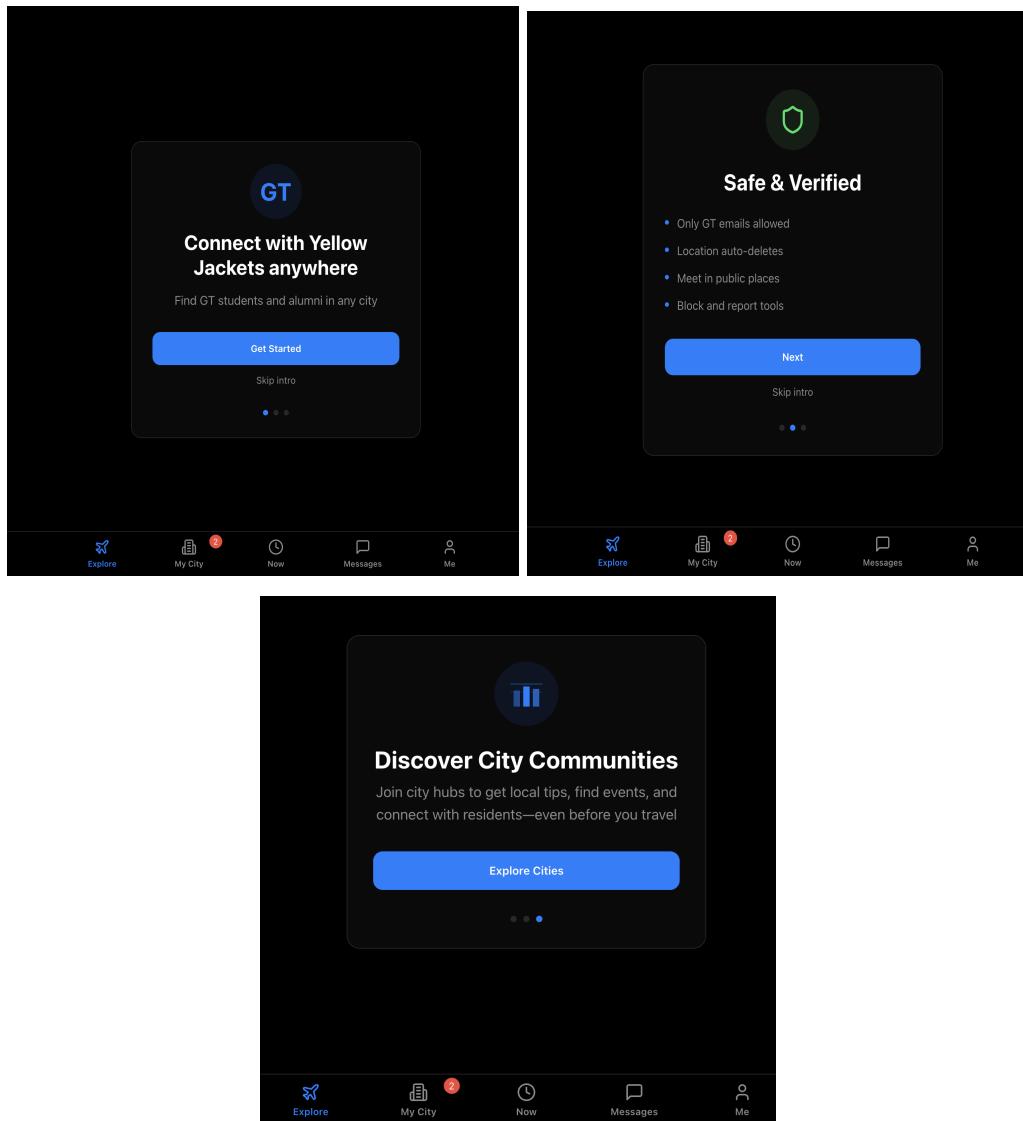
1. Default-secure architecture with contextual opt-in.

2. Nothing auto-posts. Trips require clicking + FAB and completing form with privacy options (“Anyone” vs. “Only mutual connections”) right there—not buried three screens deep in settings.
3. Availability defaults to off. Users tap duration buttons (2hr/4hr/rest of day) to activate. Auto-expiry prevents accidental persistence.
4. Forum browsing stays anonymous. Posting reveals profile, but users choose when to transition.
5. Location never stores. Ephemeral availability uses city-level matching (“within 3 miles”), not GPS coordinates.

**Impact:** Privacy messaging appears when users make decisions. Cranor’s research shows people accept information sharing when they understand why, how, and duration at decision time. Settings consolidate controls with plain language: “Who can see my trips: All GT members / Only mutual connections / Nobody.”

## **2. Final Prototype: Complete Screenshots:**

### **1. Onboarding with Key Features emphasized:**



## 1. Explore:

## Explore GT Connect

Search trips, cities, or people

### Discover Cities

Local tips, Events, Who is here

**Seattle**  
Washington  
289 members, 42 active, 8 now  
24 tips, 3 events, 2h ago  
[View Community →](#)

**San Francisco**  
California  
289 members, 42 active, 12 now  
24 tips, 3 events, 2h ago  
[View Community →](#)

[See All Cities](#)

### Who's Here Now

See who's available in your city right now

**Lisa Anderson**  
OMSCS '24  
Local  
Coffee, Networking

**Sarah Martinez**  
CS '23  
Visiting  
Hiking, Dining

**Thomas Mueller**  
ME '22  
Local  
Work, Coffee

**Priya Patel**  
OMSCS '25  
Local  
Museums

[See All Available](#)

[+](#)

Explore My City Now Messages Me

The image shows a mobile application interface with a dark theme. At the top, there are four user profiles in cards:

- Lisa Anderson** (OMSCS '24): Local, Coffee, Networking. 2.3 miles away. Buttons: View, Message.
- Sarah Martinez** (CS '23): Visiting, Hiking, Dining. 1.8 miles away. Buttons: View, Message.
- Thomas Mueller** (ME '22): Local, Work, Coffee. Buttons: View, Message.
- Priya Patel** (OMSCS '25): Local, Museums, Networking. 0.5 miles away. Buttons: View, Message.

Below the profiles is a search bar with "Filter Trips" and "Advanced Search" options.

The main content area is titled "Upcoming Trips". It displays a single trip detail card:

- SEATTLE, WA** • Posted 3 days ago
- Nov 15-18, 2025 (4 days)**
- Kate Sullivan** (CS '23)
- Interview**
- Looking for: Coffee, Networking
- Description: Interviewing at tech companies. Would love to explore Pike Place and grab coffee with fellow Yellow Jackets!
- 3 mutual connections: A, B, C
- Usually responds within 1 hour
- Last active 5 min ago

At the bottom are navigation icons: Explore, My City (with a red notification badge), Now, Messages, and Me.

## ← Find Connections

I'm looking for...

- Travel companions
- Local hosts
- People with specific interests

Traveling to...

Search city...

From

To

mm/dd/yyyy

mm/dd/yyyy

Interested in...

- Coffee
- Hiking
- Networking
- Work
- Dining
- Museums
- Sports
- Music
- Art
- Technology

Preferences

Show me

- Anyone
- Mutual connections only

User type

- Current students
- Alumni
- Both



Explore



My City

2



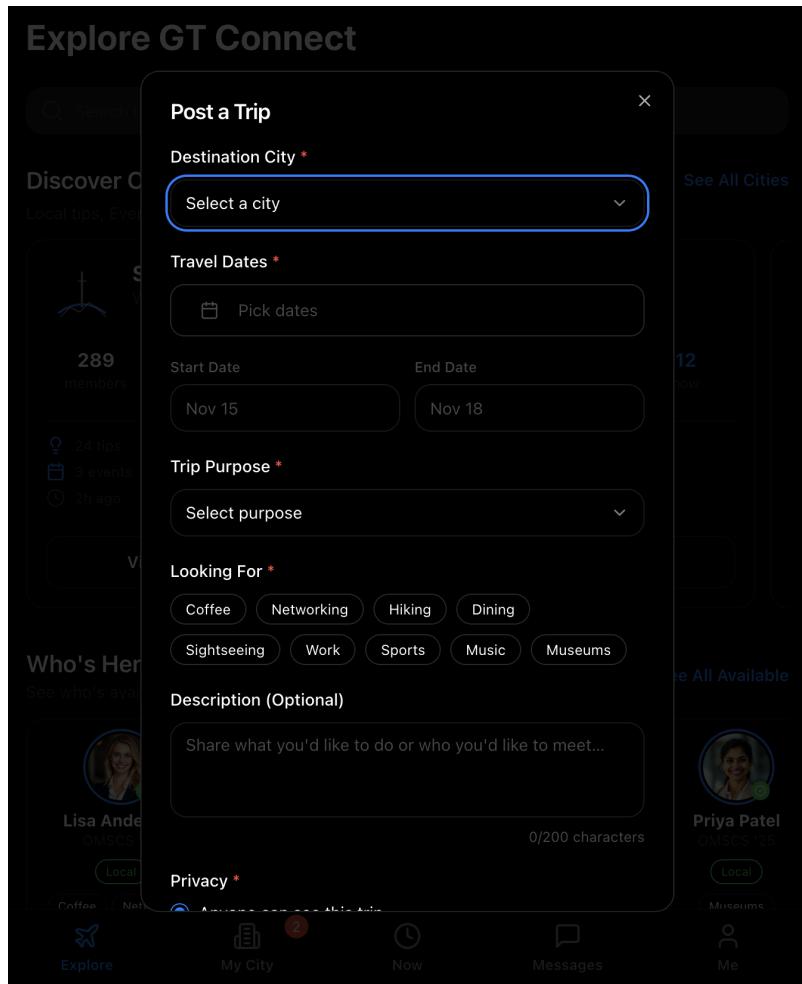
Now

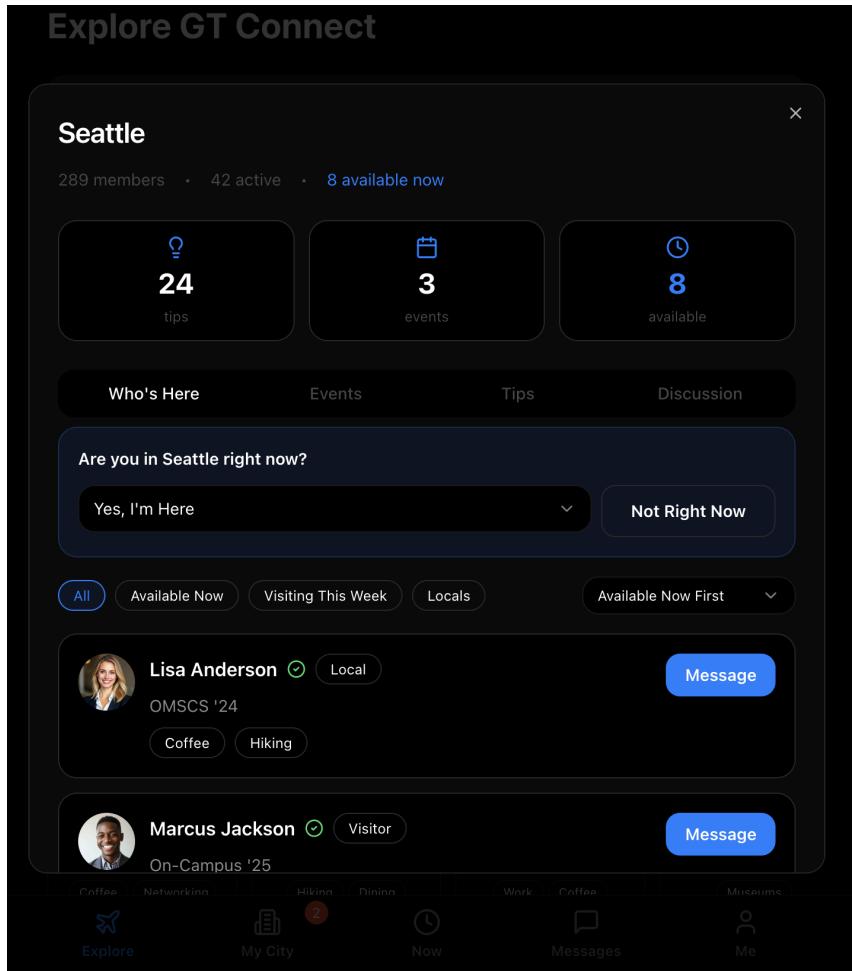


Messages

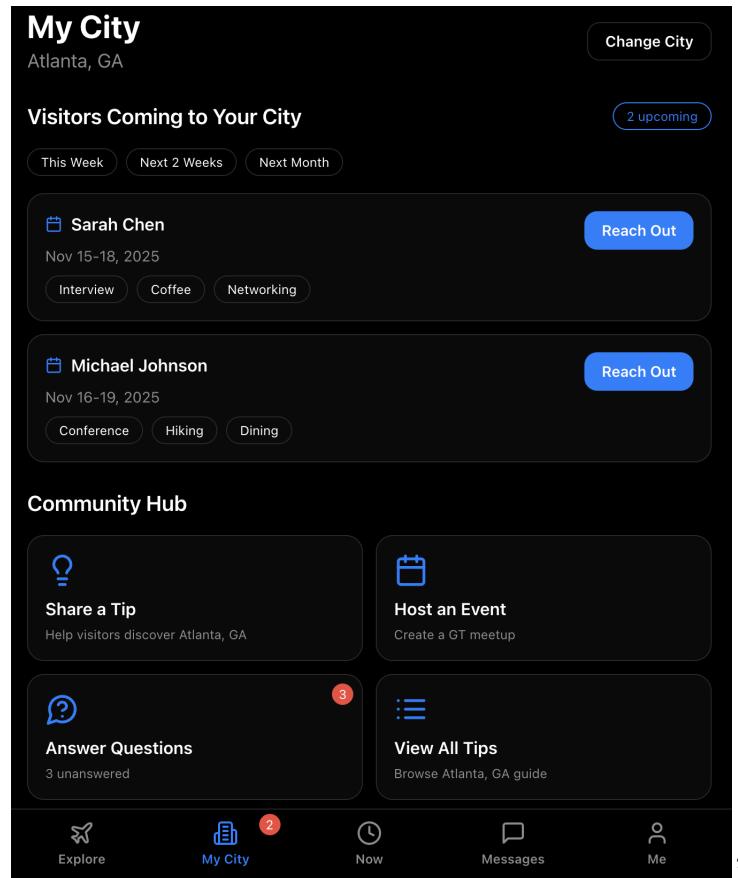


Me

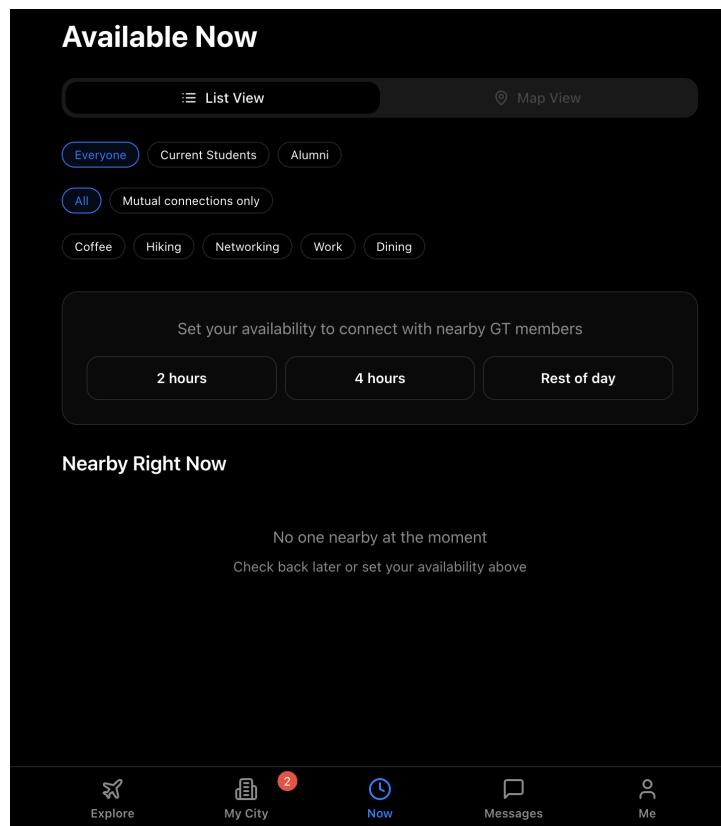




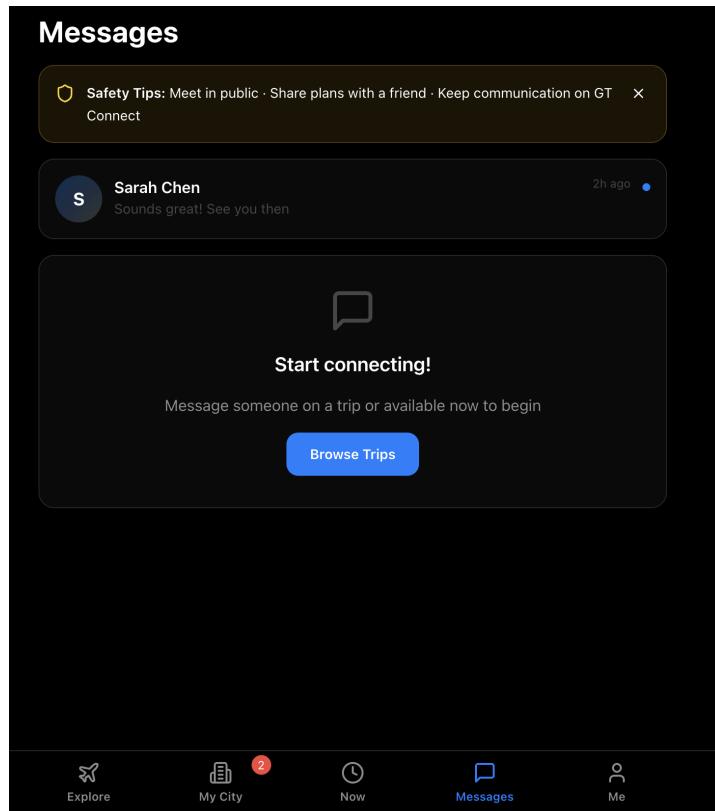
## 2. My City:

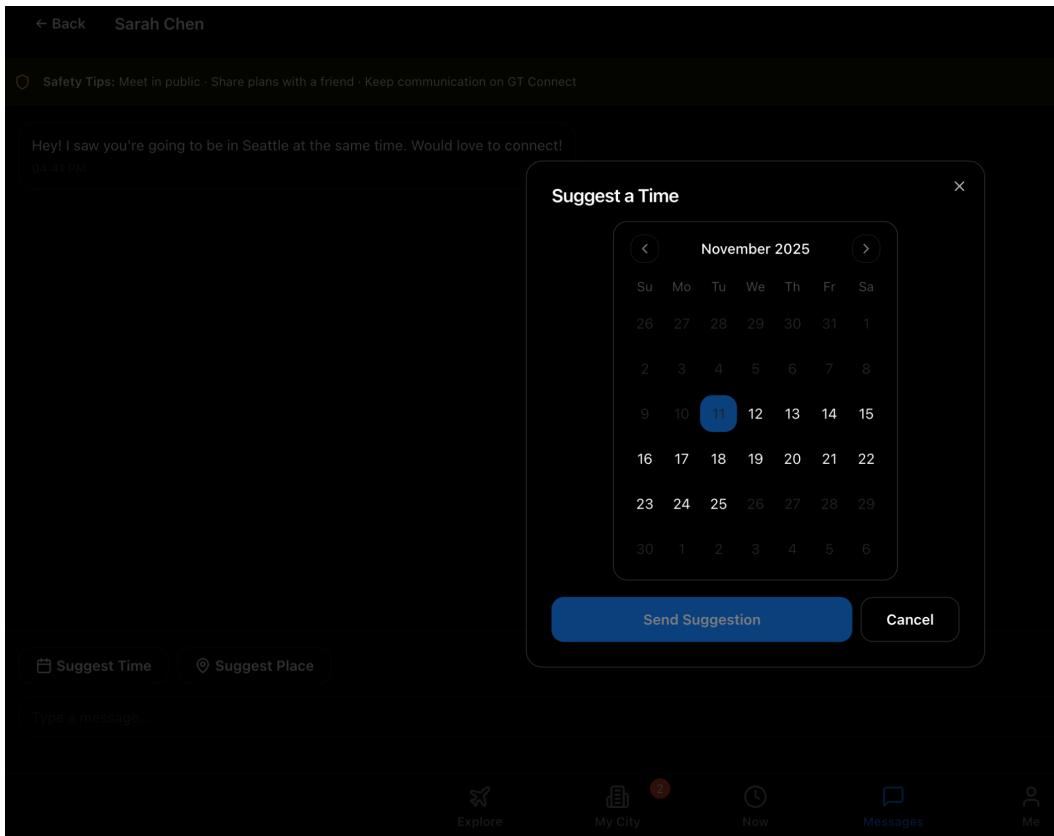


### 3. Now:



#### 4. Messages:





## 5. Me:

**Profile Screen:**

- User: John Doe (represented by a placeholder icon)
- Profile picture: JD
- Major: Computer Science '24
- Location: Atlanta, GA
- Setting: "I'm a Traveler" (Post trips and find companions in cities you're visiting) is turned on.
- Action: "View your trips in the Explore tab"
- Setting: "I'm a Local Host" (Help visiting GT members discover your city) is turned on.
- Action: "I host in: Atlanta, GA" (Change City)
- Action: "Visit the My City tab to manage hosting"

**Settings Screen:**

- Testimonial: "Great recommendations for hiking trails. Very knowledgeable about the area." - @emilypark
- Section: Blocked Users (0 blocked)
- Section: Report a User
- Section: Notifications (Notify me when people plan trips to my city, Weekly digest email) is turned on.
- Section: Privacy (Who can see my trips: All GT members)
- Section: Show testimonials on profile (Let others see your reviews) is turned on.
- Action: View My Full Activity
- Action: Demo: Leave Feedback

Both screens feature a navigation bar at the bottom with icons for Explore, My City (with a red notification badge), Now, Messages, and Me.

## End of Appendix D

## Appendix E:

### 1. Final Evaluation Survey:

## Designing Local Insider Meetups for GT's Global Community

About GT Connect: GT Connect helps GT students coordinate meetups when traveling. You can post trips, find people available now, contribute local knowledge, and message safely within the GT community. Prototype link: <https://steel-glow-ui.lovable.app/> Instructions: • Complete all 4 tasks below before continuing to survey questions • The prototype contains sample data to simulate real use • Keep this tab open—open prototype in new tab/window

\* Required

The image displays two screenshots of a survey interface, likely from Google Forms or a similar platform.

**Screenshot 1: Short Answer Field**

Type: Short Answer   Required:

Your task: Spend 4-5 minutes exploring the prototype at <https://steel-glow-ui.lovable.app/>

<https://steel-glow-ui.lovable.app/>

Short answer text

**Screenshot 2: Agreement Scale**

Type: Agreement (5..1)   Required:

**1. The system is easy to use**

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Neutral  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

## **2. I could accomplish tasks without help**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## **3. The interface felt intuitive**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## **4. I understood what information was visible to others**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Type: Agreement (5..1)     Required:  X

**5. I knew whether I was posting as a traveler or local**

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Neutral  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

Type: Agreement (5..1)     Required:  X

**6. I could find what I needed quickly**

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Neutral  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

Type: Agreement (5..1)     Required:  X

**7. Would you use GT Connect if it launched?**

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Neutral  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

## **8. What's the main benefit you'd get from GT Connect?**

- Meeting GT members when traveling
- Helping visitors to my city
- Finding people available right now
- Getting local advice
- I wouldn't use it

[Edit](#) answer choices.

Type: Agreement (5..1) [...](#) [🔗](#) [🖼️](#) [▶](#) Required:  [X](#)

## **9. I trust how GT Connect handles my location data**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Type: Agreement (5..1) [...](#) [🔗](#) [🖼️](#) [▶](#) Required:  [X](#)

## **10. I'd be comfortable posting my travel plans**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Type: Choose Multiple Required:

11. The interface combines trip planning, real-time availability, and location.

- Focused—all features belong together
- About right—useful variety
- Cluttered—too many different things
- Confusing—I'm not sure what this is for

Edit answer choices.

Type: Choose Multiple Required:

12. Which feature would you use most?

- Post trips weeks ahead
- Find people available right now
- See who's visiting my city
- Get/share local tips
- None—wouldn't use it

Edit answer choices.

Type: Short Answer Required:

13. What confused you or didn't work as expected?

Short answer text

Type: Short Answer     Required:

**14. What's missing that would make you actually use this?**

Short answer text

**15. What's your biggest hesitation?**

Short answer text

**16. Thank you! Any other thoughts/opinions?**

Short answer text

## 2. Final Evaluation Results: Raw Json survey data answers:

```
[{"id": "1762919943708", "text": "Your task: Spend 4-5 minutes exploring the prototype at https://steel-glow-ui.lovable.app/ Try these scenarios: \t•\tPost an upcoming trip to a city \t•\tSet your availability for a few hours \t•\tBrowse who's in a city right now \t•\tCheck privacy settings Then answer questions below.", "answers": [".", "Done", "yes", "I have done the above.", "Ok", "okay done", "n/a", "Done", "ok ", "a", "OK", "Ok, I found it overall a great idea but a bit cluttered at times. Alot of very helpful functionality, but could be further refined.", "yes", "Not sure what to put here", "ok, i tried.", "N/a", "Done", "done", "Done.", "Done."]}, {"id": "1762920032573", "text": "1. The system is easy to use", "answers": ["4", "5", "4", "5", "4", "4", "5", "2", "4", "4", "5", "4", "3", "4", "4", "3", "4", "4", "3", "4"]}, {"id": "1762920064075", "text": "2. I could accomplish tasks without help", "answers": ["4", "4", "4", "4", "3", "4", "5", "3", "4", "5", "5", "4", "5", "5", "4", "3", "4", "4", "4", "5"]}, {"id": "1762920083173", "text": "3. The interface felt intuitive", "answers": ["4", "4", "4", "5", "3", "5", "2", "4", "5", "4", "4", "5", "3", "4", "3", "4", "4", "2", "3"]}, {"id": "1762920100319", "text": "4. I understood what information was visible to others", "answers": ["4", "4", "4", "4", "4", "5", "3", "4", "5", "5", "3", "4", "3", "4", "3", "4", "2", "2"]}]
```

"4"]},{"id":"1762920119488","text":"5. I knew whether I was posting as a traveler or local","answers":["4","5","4","4","4","5","5","2","3","5","4","2","2","3","3","4","3","2","5"]}, {"id":"1762920134824","text":"6. I could find what I needed quickly","answers":["4","4","4","4","3","5","5","2","4","5","4","4","3","4","3","4","4","1","2"]}, {"id":"1762920152323","text":"7. Would you use GT Connect if it launched?","answers":["4","4","4","5","4","5","4","2","3","5","4","5","2","3","2","3","4","5"]}, {"id":"1762920223957","text":"8. What's the main benefit you'd get from GT Connect?","answers":["Meeting GT members when traveling","Meeting GT members when traveling","Meeting GT members when traveling;Finding people available right now","Meeting GT members when traveling;Helping visitors to my city;Finding people available right now","Meeting GT members when traveling;Getting local advice","Meeting GT members when traveling;Helping visitors to my city;Finding people available right now;Getting local advice","Meeting GT members when traveling;Helping visitors to my city;Finding people available right now;Getting local advice;I wouldn't use it","Meeting GT members when traveling;Meeting GT members when traveling;Finding people available right now;Getting local advice","Meeting GT members when traveling;Helping visitors to my city;Meeting GT members when traveling;Finding people available right now;Getting local advice","Meeting GT members when traveling;Meeting GT members when traveling;Finding people available right now;Getting local advice;I wouldn't use it","Meeting GT members when traveling;Meeting GT members when traveling;Helping visitors to my city;Meeting GT members when traveling;Finding people available right now;Getting local advice","Meeting GT members when traveling;Meeting GT members when traveling;Helping visitors to my city;Meeting GT members when traveling;Finding people available right now;Getting local advice;I wouldn't use it"]}, {"id":"1762920286822","text":"9. I trust how GT Connect handles my location data","answers":["3","3","4","4","3","4","5","3","4","5","3","4","5","4","4","3","3","3","4","4"]}, {"id":"1762920312139","text":"10. I'd be comfortable posting my travel plans","answers":["3","4","4","4","2","3","5","3","2","5","3","4","5","3","2","3","3","4","1","4"]}, {"id":"1762920334455","text":"11. The interface combines trip planning, real-time availability, and local knowledge. Does this feel?","answers":["About right—useful variety","Focused—all features belong together","About right—useful variety","Focused—all features belong together;About right—useful variety","About right—useful variety","Focused—all features belong together;About right—useful variety","Cluttered—too many different things;Confusing—I'm not sure what this is for","About right—useful variety","Focused—all features belong together;Cluttered—too many different things;Confusing—I'm not sure what this is for","About right—useful variety","Cluttered—too many different things","Focused—all features belong together;About right—useful variety","About right—useful variety;Cluttered—too many different things","About right—useful variety","About right—useful variety;Cluttered—too many different things"]}

things","About right—useful variety","Cluttered—too many different things;Confusing—I'm not sure what this is for","Cluttered—too many different things"]},{"id":"1762920388221","text":"12. Which feature would you use most?","answers":["Get/share local tips","See who's visiting my city;Get/share local tips","See who's visiting my city","Find people available right now","Get/share local tips","Find people available right now","Post trips weeks ahead;Find people available right now;Get/share local tips","Find people available right now;Get/share local tips","See who's visiting my city","None—wouldn't use it","Post trips weeks ahead;Find people available right now;See who's visiting my city;Get/share local tips","Find people available right now","See who's visiting my city","Get/share local tips","None—wouldn't use it","None—wouldn't use it","See who's visiting my city","Find people available right now;See who's visiting my city","Find people available right now;Get/share local tips","Find people available right now;See who's visiting my city"]},{"id":"1762920492953","text":"13. What confused you or didn't work as expected?","answers":["n/a","Not really, very intuitive and straightforward","nothing reallu, it is straight forward","N/A","I was confused what the checkmarks mean, does that mean they are currently online?","The \"Post Trips\" feature felt too public. A more subtle, non-time-specific way to mark a city as a travel interest would be better.","n/a","I had no idea how to make a post. I even did ctrl+F and searched the word post and looked around for a post button but found nothing.", "nothing","a","N/A","i thought there was too many clicks involved, maybe it could be condensed into a main functionality or two.", "Nothing","I didn't notice the \"+\" button on the bottom-right initially","It's intuitive and nice concept, but I would not use it tbh","N/a","Some functionality did not work","There was some functionality on the My City tab that didn't work. But the UI informed me it was coming soon.", "The navigation. Each page has too many options going on to be simplified into just 5 icon navigation bars. The post button is only visible on Explore, and it is way off to the side on larger screens so it is easy to miss.", "It just has a lot of features hidden behind menus. I think most apps also have the Explore tab second, which probably added a bit to the confusion."]}, {"id":"1762920506297","text":"14. What's missing that would make you actually use this?","answers":["n/a","Not really, but I would like to see how the users would be flagged if there is safty concern","NA","N/A","Just being able to see the threads in the tips section.", "A clear statement on data deletion policy for all location data and trip history, even if not visible to others.", "n/a","The interface needs to be more simple. It's too cluttered for me and I couldn't find important things like post.", "its pretty solid"]}

","a","N/A","Nothing missing, maybe more refinement","i like it as is","If users had profiles so you could learn more about an alumni instead of cold messaging them","It's just not my kinda thing, I usually do not meet strangers. The app is fine.","N/A","Maybe linking to othe rsocials to see mutual","Unsure - think it's a good idea.","I personally wouldn't use it when I was traveling due to safety concerns, but I may use it to connect with people ahead of time to form connections in places I may end up going.", "N/A - it has a lot of options and transparent settings!"]}, {"id": "1762920519095", "text": "15. What's your biggest hesitation?", "answers": ["privacy/security concerns", "Security, also privacy; Especially you are sharing your locations and profile photo", "I would worry if this is used like a dating thing, sometimes you just wantto network, we dont want this to become a second linkedin kinda thing"], "N/A", "Sharing my travel information", "Ensuring my live location is truly ephemeral and cannot be accessed or stored historically by GT Connect or a third party."}, {"n/a", "It's not intuitive and is probably not an app I would think of using regularly. Although if I am traveling and wanted advice from a local that is cool.", "posting my own stuff i like to stay private"}, {"", "a", "N/A", "not sure if specific location sharing is a good idea for connecting strangers"}, {"none", "Being nervous meeting with alumni I've never talked to before"}, {"Talking to strangers"}, {"N/a", "Giving out plans and locations are scary"}, {"Maybe privacy concerns"}, {"Posting the exact dates I will be away from my home. Even if mutual, there is a chance of it getting out and I rather not post that."}, {"Interface feels a bit too cluttered. I definitely could get over this pretty fast though."}]}, {"id": "1762920532762", "text": "16. Thank you! Any other thoughts/opinions?", "answers": ["""", "", "nope", "N/A", "", "All good", "n/a", "Its not very intuitive. I don't really understand the purpose of what is means to \\"request a city\\\"", "", "a", "", "", "", "good prototype!", "Thanks!", "N/a", "", "Nope! Nice work!", "UI and the hierarchy of what is where is what needs the biggest amount of work. I had to keep clicking back and forth on tabs to remember where stuff is located."}, {"It's really good!!"}]]

Note: Some participants selected multiple options (e.g., both “Focused” and “Useful variety”). Table 3 reports primary selection (first option chosen). Total mentions: Focused=7, Useful variety=14, Cluttered=6, Confusing=2.

## End of Appendix E