Inspired by friends who don’t have access to readily available cooked meals through a dining plan, I chose to observe individuals who go grocery shopping on a regular basis. The grocery shopping process involves transportation to and from a destination as well as the purchase of items. Due to the fact that an individual might need to make several runs to the store a week--a trip that can take a considerable amount of time--and that grocery prices can fluctuate wildly, I think that grocery shopping as it stands is a very inefficient process that consumes a lot of time and money. From the perspective of the Responsible World design brief, I believe there are ways in which we as a community of mobile device users can make grocery shopping less taxing on our limited resources.

To start his trip to WalMart, John tries to determine which Shopping Express bus stop is closest to his present location. He must first find where he is on a map, and then reference the Shopping Express bus stops around him. Once he has decided on a stop, he takes a moment to contemplate the quickest bike route to the stop since there are several routes he can take. Upon arrival at the stop, John tells me that he is considering taking his bike with him, but realizes that his decision depends on whether or not there is space available on the bus bike rack. Not wanting to waste time finding a spot to lock his bike if there is no space, he decides to lock it up while he waits.

Justin waits on the bus all the way to WalMart in order to buy some bottled water. We pass by several stores that might sell water, but Justin doesn’t get off the bus. He tells me that he isn’t sure the other stores sell bottled water, and if they do, the prices might be a bit too high. Justin is eager to get there as soon as possible, but the bus makes frequent stops for people on the street who are actually waiting for other buses. Time is wasted, and more time will probably be wasted since Justin must also take the bus back once he’s done shopping.

Katie searches through several aisles before finding a baking product that she needs. She compares prices of similar items on the shelf, looking back and forth between products until she finds one that suits her needs and also at a reasonable price. I ask her if she might find a more affordable option at Target, which is right across the street, but Katie tells me that she was just over there and decided to come here instead to look for lower prices. Since she has already spent time looking for better deals between stores, she does not want to spend too much time checking out.

-To begin his trip, John needs to find the quickest route to a bus stop.

-John needs to determine the closest bus stop to his location.

-Justin was buying heavy groceries and needs to find friends who are going shopping as well so that they can help him carry things.

-Justin needs to know if closer stores sell the product he is looking for.

-Katie needs a way to compare grocery prices across stores.

-It would help if John knew whether or not there was space on the bike rack.

-Katie could benefit from knowing which baking alternatives would suit her needs.

-Katie needs to know if the checkout lanes are busy or not so she can plan her trip around the store and save time.

-To save on money, Katie needs to know if there are coupons from the manufacturer that stores might not distribute or if there are good sales going on.

-Justin needs a way to keep track of how busy the buses are so that he avoids times when the buses make frequent stops.

-Katie, John, and Justin could use a personalized in-store shopping route to look for items so they’re not going back and forth between aisles.

-The bus riders would benefit from a system where people who are waiting for a bus indicate which bus they are waiting for.

-Katie needs a method that considers factors such as time and distance then tells her if going to another store to look for cheaper products is worth it.

-Due to the added bulk of the groceries John will buy, John needs to find the most “bikeable” or bike-friendly route back to her apartment.

-John and Justin would find it beneficial to be reminded what time the bus is close to arrival so that they know whether or not to speed up their shopping.

-John needs a system that tells him if he has bought too many things to be able to bike back to his room comfortably.

-Since the grocery items are shelf stable and not too personal, all three individuals would benefit from someone going shopping for them.

-Justin needs to know where things are?