

Soul0Travel

Executive Summary

Soul0Travel ("CallShotgun") is a social travel companion platform designed for 18–35-year-olds who face friction when planning trips and coordinating rides. The product combines AI-powered itinerary generation with matching, ride coordination ("Call Shotgun"), cost splitting and community discovery. The immediate wedge is rides to airports and event trips from U.S. college campuses where liquidity is highest. Over the next eight months Soul0Travel will validate demand, build an MVP, test product-market fit and begin scaling to multiple campuses.

One-sentence value proposition: *CallShotgun reduces planning stress and saves money by matching like-minded travellers for airport rides and trips, while offering single-player tools for itinerary planning, cost split and group coordination.*

Top insights from market & competitor analysis

1. **Huge travel spend and rising Gen Z demand.** Global leisure travel is expected to more than triple to **\$1.4 trillion by 2040**[bcg.com](https://www.bcg.com). In the U.S. 92 % of Americans plan to travel in 2025, with travellers expecting to spend \$5,138 per trip and take 4.2 vacationscondorferries.co.ukmmgyintel.com. Gen Z and millennials travel more frequently than older cohorts[bcg.com](https://www.bcg.com) and use social media and AI for planningtravelperk.commmgyintel.com.
2. **Rising adoption of ridesharing and group trip planning.** The U.S. ride-sharing market reached **\$28.5 billion in 2024** and is forecast to double by 2034gminsights.com. Student ride-sharing platforms alone generated **\$2.3 billion in 2024**, growing to **\$6.7 billion by 2033**dataintel.com. Group travel trips are increasing; an industry survey showed 11 % of travellers went with loved ones in 2023—a 57 % jump from 2022phocuswire.com—and Airbnb disclosed that **80 % of trips** booked on its platform are group tripsphocuswire.com.
3. **Painful planning and coordination.** Forums reveal travellers are burnt out by messy spreadsheets, endless group chats and manual payment collection when organising tripsreddit.com. Another post notes the exhaustion of juggling everyone's preferences and budgetsreddit.com. Market commentary echoes this: group planning is fragmented across multiple channels and paymentsphocuswire.com. There is a clear opportunity to centralise planning, matching and payment splitting with strong safety features.

Wedge strategy – Why airport rides & campus/event travel

- **Predictable, time-boxed demand:** College breaks, holiday weekends and events generate surges of travel to airports and stadiums. TSA forecasts **3.1 million daily enplanements in 2025**[dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov), and Lyft data shows campus rides increased 32 % over two academic years[lyft.com](https://www.lyft.com). Students rely heavily on ride-hailing; half of U.S. 18-29-year-olds have used Uber/Lyftinsidehighered.com.
- **High willingness to share costs:** Young travellers are budget-constrained—35 % of Gen Z stay in 3-star or lower hotelstravelperk.com—and are open to carpooling. Services like BlaBlaCar and Poparide show

there is demand for longer-distance carpoolingtheamericaninparis.compoparide.com.

- **Campus concentration aids liquidity:** Top universities have tens of thousands of students (U.S. college enrollment ~19 millioneducationdata.org). Lyft's campus data highlights major ride categories (bars, restaurants, gyms)lyft.com. Focusing on a few campuses allows us to achieve liquidity quickly, learn, and replicate playbooks.

Six-month goals & success criteria

Goal	Metric & target	Success criteria
Validate demand for shared airport rides	≥ 30 % of surveyed students indicate interest; 100 ride requests across 3 campuses within 3 months	Indication of problem/solution fit
Achieve initial liquidity	In pilot campuses: average ≥ 2 matches per ride request; activation rate (post request within 7 days) ≥ 25 %	Demand meets supply for rides
Single-player retention	Day-7 retention ≥ 35 % for users using AI itinerary & planning tools	Evidence that app has utility even without matches
Build & launch MVP	Ship MVP by week 12; sign up 500 users across Princeton, Rutgers and one peer campus	Technical execution and early adoption
Collect safety & trust feedback	80 % of users report feeling safe; 0 major incidents reported	Confidence in trust systems

Problem & Customer Jobs

Problem narrative

College students and young professionals frequently travel for holidays, internships, concerts or sporting events but face high costs and planning frustration. Finding a ride to the airport often means paying expensive ride-hail fares or relying on friends' schedules. Coordination is cumbersome: travellers juggle multiple chat apps, spreadsheets, and payment platforms, leading to miscommunication and delaysreddit.com. In group trips, differing budgets and preferences create tension and planning fatiguereddit.com. Safety concerns deter individuals from ridesharing; campuses deploy limited shuttle servicesinsidehighered.com, and informal "beeping" ride groups rely on unvetted driversinsidehighered.com.

Jobs-to-be-Done (JTBD)

Persona	Functional JTBD	Social JTBD	Emotional JTBD
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Budget Backpacker (college student with limited funds)	Find affordable transportation to/from airport or events; split costs transparently; discover budget-friendly itineraries	Appear adventurous and well-informed among peers; join communities of like-minded travellers	Feel secure that they won't overspend; trust strangers they ride with; alleviate FOMO by coordinating with peers
Solo Safety-Seeker (young woman travelling alone)	Access verified rideshares with background checks; plan solo or shared trips; schedule rides at odd hours	Signal independence and responsibility; find trusted travel partners (e.g., same gender)	Reduce anxiety about traveling alone; feel empowered to explore new places safely
Group Organizer (friend group planner / student club leader)	Build itineraries quickly, gather preferences, collect payments, and coordinate logistics across members	Demonstrate leadership and fairness; avoid being blamed for decisions; maintain harmony	Reduce cognitive load and burnout; feel appreciated; enjoy trips without being overwhelmed

Evidence from forums and listservs

- A Reddit user planning a weekend trip complained that using Google Sheets and Trello was messy; chat messages buried decisions and there was no single place to organize activities and costs [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/college/comments/10q8q8q/college_trip_planning_help/).
- Another traveller shared that coordinating travel with others is exhausting because everyone has different paces, budgets and expectations; even travelling with close friends detracted from the experience [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/college/comments/10q8q8q/college_trip_planning_help/).
- University safe-ride programs (e.g., UF Safe Rides by Lyft, KU SafeRide) show demand for affordable, safe transportation at night [insidehighered.com](https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2023/05/16/college-safe-ride-programs), while informal “beeping” ride threads show students resorting to unregulated ride sharing and paying \$2–5 per ride [insidehighered.com](https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2023/05/16/college-safe-ride-programs)—evidence that students crave cheap, reliable rides.

Market Sizing (TAM/SAM/SOM) & Beachhead

Total Addressable Market (TAM)

- **Global leisure travel & group coordination:** Leisure travel spending is projected to reach \$1.35 trillion in the U.S. in 2025 [condorferries.co.uk](https://www.condorferries.co.uk/) and \$1.4 trillion globally by 2040 [bcg.com](https://www.bcg.com/). The trip planning as a service market is valued at \$5.82 billion in 2024 and expected to grow to \$19.03 billion by 2033 [growthmarketreports.com](https://www.growthmarketreports.com/). The airport shuttle bus market is forecast to reach \$24.9 billion by 2032 [gminsights.com](https://www.gminsights.com/).
- **Ride-sharing:** The U.S. ride-sharing market was \$28.5 billion in 2024 and is projected to double by 2034 [gminsights.com](https://www.gminsights.com/). Student ride-sharing platforms alone generated \$2.3 billion in

2024dataintel.com.

- **Group travel:** Group travel demand is up 57 % year-over-yearphocuswire.com; Airbnb reports 80 % of trips are group tripsphocuswire.com.

Serviceable Available Market (SAM)

- **Demographic focus:** 18–35-year-old budget/social travellers in North America initially. U.S. college and university enrollment totals ≈ 19 million studentseducationdata.org. We assume ~ 75 % (14.2 million) travel at least twice per year (survey data shows 92 % of Americans plan to travelcondorferries.co.uk). Average trip spend is \$5,138condorferries.co.uk; we focus on transportation and planning services (~ 10 % of trip spend = \$514). Thus SAM for this demographic: $14.2 \text{ million} \times \$514 \times 2 \text{ trips} \approx \14.6 billion .
- **Selected corridors:** We limit to North American cross-region travel and select EU/SEA corridors for future expansion; we assume this is roughly 20 % of TAM.

Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM) – Year 1–2 beachhead

- **Campus-centric airport rides:** Focus on Princeton, Rutgers–New Brunswick and one additional campus. Combined student population ≈ 90 k. Suppose 60 % travel home or to events twice per year; 50 % are willing to share rides. Potential ride requests = $90 \text{ k} \times 0.6 \times 2 \times 0.5 \approx 54 \text{ k rides per year}$. At an average \$40 per ride (split), the year 1 SOM is $\approx \$2.16 \text{ million}$.
- **Sensitivity analysis:** In a best case, adoption reaches 80 % and average ride value is \$50 \rightarrow \$7.2 million. Worst case, adoption is 30 % and ride value \$30 \rightarrow \$0.5 million. This illustrates the importance of campus liquidity and pricing.

Competitive & Analog Landscape

Comparison matrix

Category	Example products	Core job solved	Liquidity requirement	Trust/safety	Fees & monetization	Moats & loops	Gap & relevance
Rideshare / carpool	Poparide – posts & books inter-city carpool trips with secure payments, driver verification and review system poparide.com ; BlaBlaCar – connects drivers and passengers for long-distance rides; offers ID verification, gender-specific matches and	Provide affordable rides by matching drivers and	Needs high density of routes and time-aligned rides	Verified IDs, ratings, ability to restrict by gender	Platform takes booking fee (Poparide), per ride fee (BlaBlaCar)	Network effects: more routes attract more riders	Focus on intercity trips; no integrated trip planning or cost-split

	reviews theamericaninparis.com	passengers					ting for groups
Travel meta search & planning	Rome2Rio – multi-modal travel search (planes, trains, buses, ferries), price comparison and real-time updates; integrates with Uber/Lyft thefabryk.com	Discover route options and booking links	Moderate; relies on aggregated data not peers	Limited safety; not a social platform	Advertisements, referral commissions	Data on routes; brand recognition	Does not match travellers together; no group coordination
Group trip planning & payments	Joyned – B2B widget enabling travellers to plan/book together within partner sites; allows tagging options, discussion threads and AI-powered planning velocityventures.vctravolution.com . SquadTrip – enables trip organizers to create pages, collect payments, manage inventory and send automated reminders squadtrip.com squadtrip.com	Centralize planning, preferences and payment collection	Low: groups self-invite; network effect is in B2B adoption	Security via secure payments and site partner social	SaaS fee per booking or subscription	Embedding within existing booking sites; network effects for partners	Focus on organizers; lacks real-time matching and rideshare component
Accommodations & social hostels	Hostelworld – social trip plan marketplace: users create trip profiles with dates, destinations and desired companions; AI uses chat data to match travellers phocuswire.com	Match travellers staying in hostels; social discovery	Medium: requires enough traveller's per hostel location	Verification through profiles and ratings	Commission on bookings	Strong brand, global supply	Hostel-centric; not focused on ground transport
Social matching & analogs	Bumble BFF – standalone friend-finding app; free with optional subscription; travellers can specify travel dates in profiles travelherstory.com . Meetup/Discord/Reddit – communities for finding travel buddies or rides via group posts and chats	Meet new friends or communities	Low; asynchronous matching	Minimal verification; moderators manage communities	Ad-supported or freemium	Large communities; network effects	No itinerary or ride matching; manual coordination; safety risks

Gaps exploited by CallShotgun

- **One-stop solution:** Integrates AI trip planning, ride matching, cost splitting and group chat. Existing platforms specialise in one or two of these jobs but none combine them.
- **Campus wedge:** By focusing on specific campuses with time-boxed demand (airport rides, events), the platform can achieve liquidity faster than general carpool apps.
- **Verified community:** School email verification, optional ID checks and ratings provide greater trust than open social platforms.
- **Single-player utility:** Stand-alone itinerary builder, packing lists and expense manager offer value even with few matches; this fosters retention and data for improved matching.

Differentiation & Moat Thesis

1. **Wedge of airport & event rides:** Students frequently need to get to airports and events at the same time. TSA projects 3.1 million daily enplanements [dhs.gov](https://www.dhs.gov) and campus ride-hail usage is up 32% [lyft.com](https://www.lyft.com). Providing a reliable, affordable way to share rides creates initial liquidity and builds habit.
2. **Single-player utility:** Tools like AI itinerary builder, cost split, packing lists and offline day plans ensure value even when network density is low. This mitigates the cold-start problem and collects data on preferences.
3. **Data & learning loops:** Each trip generates signals (destinations, time, preferences, budgets, reliability). Preference vectors feed the matching algorithm; reliability scores improve trust; itinerary quality ratings refine AI suggestions. Over time, this creates defensible recommendations and community graphs.
4. **Trust & safety:** Multi-tier verification (school email, optional ID), rider/driver ratings, same-gender matching, safety checklists and campus ambassador oversight foster a safe environment, addressing concerns expressed in campus ride programs [insidehighered.com](https://www.insidehighered.com).

Lean Hypotheses & Experiments

ID	Hypothesis	Metric & target	Method	Timeline
H1 – Ride matching demand	If we show users 2+ compatible matches within 10 minutes, ≥ 25 % will accept and share a ride.	Activation rate (ride request → match acceptance) ≥ 25 %.	Launch airport ride feature on 3 campuses; send push notifications when matches available; measure acceptance vs. drop-off.	Weeks 3–12 (MVP launch)

H2 – Single-player retention	Users who complete an AI itinerary are more likely to return; D7 retention \geq 35 %.	D7 retention vs. baseline (control group without AI plan).	A/B test AI itinerary builder; track retention and satisfaction.	Weeks 4–12
H3 – Campus email verification increases liquidity	Enabling campus email/SSO results in +30 % matches per request.	Average matches per ride request.	Implement school email verification; compare match rates before/after.	Weeks 6–14
H4 – Group chat summarisation speeds decisions	AI-generated summaries and polls reduce time to decision by 20 %.	Median time from group creation to finalised plan.	Instrument group chats; enable AI summarisation in half of groups; measure time to consensus.	Weeks 8–16
H5 – Cost split integration drives retention	Adding Venmo/Zelle links in chat results in 20 % higher D30 retention.	D30 retention; number of payment splits executed.	Deploy cost-split widget; track retention and user feedback.	Weeks 10–20
H6 – Referral program boosts sign-ups	Offering free ride credits for referrals increases sign-ups by 15 %.	New sign-ups per week.	Launch referral codes via ambassadors; monitor uplift vs. pre-launch baseline.	Weeks 12–24
H7 – Verified badge increases safety perception	90 % of surveyed users perceive rides as safe after verifying.	Safety satisfaction rating in survey.	Introduce verification tiers; run survey after rides.	Weeks 12–20
H8 – Weekend event pilot	Hosting an event-specific travel board (e.g., Coachella or football game) generates 200+ ride posts.	Number of event ride posts; match rate.	Partner with student clubs; create event boards; promote via QR codes.	Weeks 16–24

MVP Scope (90 days) & Tech Stack

Core slice (MVP)

1. Trip card & “Call Shotgun”: Users create a trip with origin, destination (e.g., airport), date/time. The system matches ride requests within a defined time window using routing algorithm. A “Call Shotgun”

button posts the ride request.

2. **Group chat with AI summary:** After a match, a group chat is created. Chat includes decision polls, AI summary chip (extracts key decisions and tasks) and payment call-to-action. Simple push notifications via Firebase Cloud Messaging.
3. **Cost split:** Users can split ride or trip expenses; generate payment links (Venmo/Zelle) and track status.
4. **AI day plan:** On trip creation, the AI suggests an itinerary based on destination, budget and interests; uses LLM prompt templates; users can edit and save to calendar.
5. **Campus email verification:** SSO / OAuth via school email; optional ID upload for higher trust. Verified badge displayed on profile.

Tech stack

Layer	Choice & rationale
Frontend	Next.js (web) for marketing site & admin; Expo/React Native for mobile app – cross-platform, fast iteration and access to device features.
Backend	Node.js with NestJS or Express for APIs; Postgres via Supabase for relational data; Prisma as ORM.
Real-time	WebSockets (Socket.IO) or Supabase Realtime for group chat and match notifications.
Auth	Supabase Auth with JWT; optional OAuth (Google/Apple) and campus email verification via SSO or Magic Link.
Maps & routes	Google Maps Platform for routing, geocoding, and calculating detours; fallback to Mapbox for cost control.
LLM	OpenAI API for itinerary generation, group chat summarisation and function-calling; later fine-tune to travel domain.
Notifications	Firebase Cloud Messaging for push; Twilio for SMS (backup).
Analytics	PostHog for event tracking, funnels and heatmaps; optionally Amplitude for deeper segmentation.
Infrastructure	Vercel for web; Railway/Render/AWS for APIs; Amazon S3 or Supabase Storage for media. Row-level security rules and rate limiting protect data.

System diagram & core data model

The diagram illustrates the core entities: **User**, **Trip** (origin, destination, date/time, budget), **RideRequest** (associated with a Trip; stores time window and seat count), **Match** (links compatible ride requests), **Group** (chat

and expenses), **Message**, **Expense**, and **Rating** (mutual feedback). Each user can create trips and ride requests; matches spawn groups where messages and expenses are recorded; ratings feed reliability scores.

UX & UI Spec

Critical screens & flows

1. **Onboarding:** Simple questionnaire to capture persona type (budget/backpacker, safety-seeker, organizer), interests and safety preferences. Allows optional ID verification; collects contact info and prompts to verify campus email. Empty state provides travel tips and invites user to create a trip.
2. **Create Trip / "Airport Ride":** Quick flow with three inputs: origin (pre-filled as campus or current location), destination (airport or event), date/time. User can set ride preferences (max detour, gender preference, budget). A "Call Shotgun" button posts a ride request and enters queue.
3. **Matches View:** Shows list of compatible ride matches ranked by compatibility score (similar time, route, persona, reliability). Each card displays profile picture, university, rating, mutual connections and cost estimate. Users can accept or decline; accept triggers group chat creation.
4. **Group Chat:** Real-time chat with participants. Features include: AI summary chip summarising discussions; decision polls (e.g., departure time, playlist selection); payment split widget generating Venmo links; ability to share packing lists and itinerary attachments. Safety checklist ensures seat belts, COVID protocols, etc.
5. **AI Day Plan:** When viewing a trip, user can toggle "Day Plan" to see AI-generated itinerary with recommended attractions, estimated costs, and travel time. Budget slider adjusts suggestions (e.g., free/paid attractions). Users can edit, add personal notes, and export to Google Calendar.
6. **Empty state:** If no matches yet, the app displays single-player utilities: itinerary builder, packing list generator, budget tracker, and travel inspiration feed. Encourages user to invite friends or share trip link.

Wireframe descriptions

The user flow above outlines the key steps from onboarding through creating a trip, calling shotgun, viewing matches, initiating group chat, viewing AI day plan and completing the ride. Each step is designed to reduce friction: three-tap ride posting, immediate match notifications and integrated tools to plan and pay.

Go-to-Market (GTM): Route to market & cold-start plan

Beachhead campuses (Year 1)

1. **Princeton University** – small, residential campus with high percentage of out-of-state and international students. High volume of airport travel during breaks.
2. **Rutgers University – New Brunswick** – large public commuter school with diverse student population; high volume of weekend travel to NYC and airports. Lyft reports that almost half of Rutgers rides are to

workplaces [lyft.com](https://www.lyft.com).

3. **Optional third campus** – e.g., University of Delaware or Penn State; selected for manageable size and strong student organizations.

Tactics for cold-start

- **Campus ambassadors & partnerships:** Recruit ambassadors (international center interns, student government) to promote app, gather feedback and moderate communities. Offer ambassador rewards (free ride credits, resume experience).
- **Airport-ride weekends:** Organize “Call Shotgun to JFK/EWR” events before major breaks; provide discounted rides (subsidised by marketing budget) and free snacks to early adopters.
- **QR posters & listserv integrations:** Place QR codes in dorms, dining halls and transit stops; integrate with campus listservs/Discords; share trip links in event Slack channels.
- **Referral & rewards:** Launch friend-invite program with free ride credit. Verified school email badge encourages trust and social status.
- **Community content:** Create travel boards for Spring Break, study-abroad cohorts and events (e.g., Coachella, football games). Provide itineraries and allow students to connect.

KPI tree & funnel

Our north star metric is the **match success rate** (number of rides completed / number of ride requests). This cascades into signups, verified users, trips created, ride requests, matches, completed rides and post-ride reviews. The AARRR funnel will monitor Acquisition (signups), Activation (first trip posted), Retention (D7/D30), Referral (shares/invites) and Revenue (transactions). **Target benchmarks (90/180 days):**

Stage	90-day target	180-day target
Signups	1,000 students across 3 campuses	5,000 users across 5 campuses
Verified users	≥ 70 % complete email verification	≥ 80 % verification
Trips created	500 trips	3,000 trips
Ride requests	300 requests	2,000 requests
Matches	≥ 60 % match rate within 10 minutes	≥ 75 % match rate
Completed rides	100 rides	1,200 rides
D7 retention	35 %	40 %
Referral invitations	200 invites	1,500 invites

Monetization Experiments & Unit Economics

Monetization options

1. **Freemium → Premium:** Base features free. Premium subscription (\$4.99/month) offers priority matching, advanced filters (e.g., baggage size, music preferences), ride backup (guaranteed match 24 h before departure), and concierge support.
2. **Affiliate / partner bookings:** Earn commissions by referring users to partner transport (airport shuttle, bus) and accommodations. For example, referral fees from booking flights/trains via integrated meta search (like Rome2Rio or Skyscanner) and from local experiences.
3. **Sponsored experiences:** Curate and promote local tours or events for a fee. Requires careful vetting to maintain trust.
4. **Payment take-rate:** For cost splits, optionally escrow payments and take a small fee (e.g., 2 %). This may trigger regulations; initial MVP uses pass-through links (Venmo/Zelle) to avoid licensing.

Unit economics (v0)

Assume average ride price \$40 and platform take-rate 10 %. Contribution margin per ride = \$4. Customer acquisition cost (CAC) via ambassador program estimated at \$10 (flyers, events). Lifetime value (LTV) = (# rides per user × contribution per ride). If average user completes 6 rides/year and retains for 1.5 years, $LTV \approx 6 \times 1.5 \times \$4 = \$36$. $CAC:LTV \approx 1:3.6$, meeting sustainable threshold. For premium subscriptions, ARPU increases; we will refine after pilot.

Regulatory & liability considerations

- **Coordination vs. commercial ride service:** Soul0Travel facilitates cost-sharing between travellers already planning to drive (similar to BlaBlaCar). It does not operate as a transportation network company (TNC) or dispatch drivers for profit. Terms of service clearly state that drivers must not profit beyond cost recovery; they are responsible for their own insurance and compliance. Legal counsel must review state rideshare laws to avoid classification as a TNC.
- **Campus policies:** Align with campus transportation policies. Partner with universities to integrate with existing safety programs (e.g., UF Safe Rides) insidehighered.com and ensure ride matching does not conflict with shuttle services.
- **Data privacy & security:** Comply with GDPR/CCPA; collect minimal PII; provide options for pseudonyms. Employ row-level security and encryption. Have incident response plan for data breaches.
- **Insurance & liability:** Encourage drivers to maintain personal insurance; optionally partner with insurance providers to offer coverage for cost-sharing trips. Provide safety checklists and emergency contact features.

Metrics, Dashboards & Research Plan

Key metrics

- **North Star:** Successful coordinated rides per active trip (match success rate).
- **Activation:** Time to first match (TTFM); percentage of users posting a ride request within 7 days; AI itinerary completion rate.
- **Retention:** D1/D7/D30 retention; average messages per group; repeat ride requests; saved itineraries.
- **Referral & virality:** Number of invites sent per user; referral conversion rate.
- **Revenue:** Number of premium subscribers; total booking commissions; payment volumes.

Dashboards & tools

Use PostHog to build dashboards for sign-ups, funnel steps, match rate, chat engagement and retention cohorts. Integrate with Amplitude for more advanced product analytics. Collect qualitative feedback through in-app surveys and NPS.

Research plan

1. **Survey instrument (10–12 questions):** demographics (age, school, travel frequency); pain points when travelling; willingness to share rides; budget sensitivity; safety concerns; interest in AI itineraries; expected features; frequency of group travel; existing tools used. Use Google Forms or Typeform; distribute via ambassadors and listservs.
2. **Interview guides (5–7 participants per persona):** Ask about past travel planning experiences, biggest frustrations, willingness to share rides with strangers, trust factors, desired features. Use semi-structured interviews (30–45 min). Include at least two female solo travellers to understand safety issues.
3. **Campus intercept script:** Approach students near dining halls or transit stops; ask if they travel home by plane, how they currently get to the airport, and if they would use a platform to split rides; collect email for beta list. Keep under 3 minutes.
4. **Testing cadence:** Weekly experiment sprints; bi-weekly synthesis of user feedback; monthly roadmap review with metrics. Use A/B tests to evaluate hypotheses (see table above).

Phased Roadmap (Oct 2025 – Oct 2026)

Phase	Timeframe	Objectives	Success criteria	Risks & mitigations
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Phase 0 – Problem validation	Weeks 0–2	Conduct survey & 15 user interviews; refine JTBD & personas; evaluate legal constraints; set success metrics.	15 interviews completed; survey response ≥ 200 ; clear problem definition; legal opinion on TNC status.	Risk: low survey participation → incentivise respondents; risk of legal ambiguity → early legal counsel.
Phase 1 – MVP build & pilot	Weeks 3–12	Build core features (trip card, matching, chat, cost split, AI plan, email verification); soft-launch at Princeton with ambassadors; collect data.	MVP shipped by week 12; ≥ 100 sign-ups; match rate $\geq 50\%$; D7 retention $\geq 35\%$.	Risk: technical delays → scope control; risk of insufficient matches → targeted marketing; ensure safety features.
Phase 2 – Iterate & expand	Months 4–6	Add referral program, verification tiers, improved matching algorithm; expand to Rutgers and third campus; host event-specific boards; gather feedback.	3 campuses live; sign-ups $\geq 1,000$; match rate $\geq 60\%$; NPS ≥ 40 ; first monetization test (premium trial).	Risk: low liquidity in new campus → replicate ambassador playbook; risk of safety incident → invest in verification & support.
Phase 3 – Scale & monetize	Months 7–12	Polish mobile UI; roll out monetization (premium, affiliates); launch national ambassador program; integrate Beli/Reddit communities; explore partnerships with airlines/shuttles; begin EU corridor research.	5 campuses and 2 event partnerships; monthly revenue $\geq \$10k$; retention $> 40\%$; prepare for seed fundraising.	Risk: competitor response (Uber, BlaBlaCar) → emphasise campus niche; risk of spreading too thin → focus on high-density campuses.

Risks & Mitigations

Risk	Description	Mitigation
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Liquidity & cold-start	Without enough users per campus, matching fails.	Start with campuses where demand is concentrated; leverage single-player tools; use scheduled ride windows; ambassadors recruit early adopters.
Safety & trust	Safety incidents could damage brand.	Require school email, optional ID; implement ratings and reviews; offer same-gender matching; provide emergency contact; partner with campus safety services.
Multi-sided complexity	Combining trip planning, ridesharing, payment splitting and social features increases complexity.	Focus MVP on one core job (airport rides) and simple itinerary; gradually add features based on usage; keep interfaces intuitive.
Legal ambiguity	Could be classified as a TNC; liability issues.	Position as cost-share coordination platform; consult legal counsel; ensure drivers do not profit; obtain insurance options; align with campus policies.
Competitive response	Incumbents (Uber, BlaBlaCar) may reintroduce pooled rides or target campuses ridesharingforum.com .	Build defensible niche with campus partnerships, social matching and community; develop brand loyalty; emphasise planning and group features.

Appendices

Competitor tear-downs (one-pagers)

Poparide: Users post or book inter-city carpool trips via web/app; payments processed via Stripe; driver verification and reviews; 24/7 support poparide.com. Strong in Canada; monetises via booking fee. Gaps: lacks group itinerary planning and campus focus.

BlaBlaCar: Connects drivers already traveling with passengers for long-distance rides; passengers pay a share of costs; safety features include ID verification, same-gender matching and reviews theamericaninparis.com. Large network in Europe. Gaps: no integrated planning tools; limited presence in U.S. campuses.

Rome2Rio: Multi-modal travel search engine comparing planes, trains, buses, ferries and ride-share; provides price comparisons and integrates with Uber/Lyft; allows direct booking [theFabryk.com](https://www.rome2rio.com/). Strength: comprehensive route discovery; Weakness: not social, lacks group coordination.

Hostelworld: Social trip plan marketplace requiring profiles with trip details and desired companions; users browse others' profiles and chat [phocuswire.com](https://www.hostelworld.com/). AI analyses chat data to recommend matches. Focused on hostel stays; does not coordinate rides.

Joyned: B2B collaborative planning widget enabling travellers to discuss options and book together directly on partner sites; summarises top-voted options and offers AI recommendations [velocityventures.vctravolution.com](https://www.joyned.com/). Gaps: not consumer-facing, no ride matching.

SquadTrip: B2B platform for trip organizers to create selling pages, manage inventory, market, and collect payments with flexible auto-billing [squadtrip.com](https://www.squadtrip.com/). Focused on group organisers, not peer matching.

Bumble BFF & analogs: Standalone app to make friends; free with optional subscription; users can specify travel dates in profiles [travelherstory.com](https://www.bumble.com/). Meetup/Discord/Reddit communities help travellers find companions but require manual coordination and have limited safety checks.

Survey & interview templates

Survey (sample questions)

1. Age, university/affiliation, travel frequency per year.
2. How do you currently travel to airports/events? (ride-hailing, personal car, bus, friends, other)
3. Have you ever shared a ride with someone outside your immediate friend circle? If no, why not?
4. What are your biggest challenges when planning trips with friends? (select all)
5. How important are the following features? (1–5 Likert): cost sharing, matching with compatible travellers, itinerary planning, safety verification, group chat, payment splitting.
6. Would you use an app that matches you with other students heading to the same destination to share rides and plan together?
7. What safety measures would make you comfortable sharing rides with strangers? (ID verification, school email, ratings, same-gender option, other)
8. How much are you willing to pay for premium features (priority matching, backup ride)?
9. How do you currently split costs when traveling with friends? (Venmo, cash, other)
10. Open comments: Describe a recent travel planning experience that frustrated you.

Interview guide (30 min)

- Warm-up: Ask about background, major, travel frequency.
- Explore last trip: Who planned? What tools did you use? What went wrong?
- Airport ride experiences: How do you get to the airport? Ever shared a ride? Would you be open to carpooling with strangers? Why/why not?
- Safety: What makes you feel safe or unsafe when ridesharing? Thoughts on school email verification or ID checks?
- Feature desirability: Show wireframes; ask which features are most compelling, what's missing.
- Pricing: How much would you pay for convenience? Premium features?
- Close: Any concerns about using such a platform? Would you recommend it?

Campus intercept script (2–3 min)

"Hi, we're building CallShotgun, an app to help students share rides to the airport and plan trips. Can I ask three quick questions? 1) How do you usually get to the airport? 2) Would you ever share a ride with other students if it saved you money? 3) What's one thing that annoys you when planning trips with friends?" Capture responses and invite them to join the beta list.

MVP PRD & sprint plan (one page)

Product requirements document (PRD)

Objective: Build a minimum viable product enabling students at pilot campuses to post airport ride requests, match with peers, chat, split costs and receive AI-generated itineraries.

Features & acceptance criteria:

1. **Trip creation & ride request** – Users can create a trip with origin/destination, date/time. Acceptance: Trip saved to database; ride request created; user sees pending request in "My Trips".
2. **Matching engine** – System matches ride requests with overlapping times (± 30 min), similar route and preferences. Acceptance: At least one match is returned within 10 minutes; match card displays user details and cost estimate.
3. **Group chat** – Accepting a match generates a group chat where users can send messages. Acceptance: Real-time messages appear for all participants; messages persist.
4. **AI itinerary generator** – On trip creation, system uses LLM to recommend day itinerary. Acceptance: Itinerary displayed; user can edit items and export to calendar.
5. **Cost split** – In group chat, users can input ride cost and split evenly; system generates Venmo/Zelle links. Acceptance: Payment links created and tracked; each user can mark as paid.
6. **Verification & profiles** – Users sign up via email; campus email verification optional; profile shows verification badge and rating. Acceptance: Verified badge appears for those completing verification;

rating updated after rides.

Release criteria: MVP must be usable end-to-end by ambassadors; zero critical bugs; core flows tested; user data secured.

6-week sprint plan

Sprint	Duration	Scope
Sprint 0 (Week 0-1)	Set up repo, choose tech stack, design schema, implement authentication (email + school), create project plan.	
Sprint 1 (Week 1-2)	Build trip creation form and database models; implement ride request posting; basic UI skeleton.	
Sprint 2 (Week 2-3)	Implement matching algorithm; create matches view; integrate push notifications.	
Sprint 3 (Week 3-4)	Build group chat (Socket.IO/Supabase); integrate AI itinerary generation; start front-end polishing.	
Sprint 4 (Week 4-5)	Develop cost split feature; integrate payment link generation; implement rating system.	
Sprint 5 (Week 5-6)	Verification flows (campus email & optional ID); add profile settings; test end-to-end flows with ambassadors; fix bugs; prepare soft launch.	

Ambassador playbook & launch checklist (excerpt)

- Recruit 3-5 ambassadors per campus (diverse backgrounds) and train them on the app's features, safety protocol and data-collection goals.
- Ambassadors host table events in dining halls; collect survey responses; distribute referral codes; assist in verifying users.
- Use social media (Instagram, TikTok) to post about airport ride weekends; ambassadors share behind-the-scenes travel tips.
- Place QR codes on flyers and digital boards; monitor scan rates.
- Organize one launch event per campus; provide food and small giveaways; gather early feedback.
- Gather weekly feedback from ambassadors; iterate marketing and product accordingly.

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