

Georgia Tech Students Win Toyota and Net Impact's National Competition with App Concept for People Who Use Wheelchairs

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Plano, TX (May 22, 2017) – Earlier this year, a team of students at Georgia Tech realized that there was a critical gap in transportation services for people who use wheelchairs – and they wondered if the solution could be in the palm of their hands.

Today, the students’ concept for an app-based service to address this issue, “Para Pickup,” has been named the winner of the Next Generation Mobility Challenge. The Challenge is a national competition from the Toyota Mobility Foundation and Net Impact to inspire millennials to use design thinking to solve mobility issues. Nearly 600 students participated at 15 events across the country.

The winning team pitched an app-based, para-transit taxi service that gives people who use wheelchairs a safe, affordable and flexible way to get around. This concept would supplement current public para-transit transportation services, which are affordable, but can be inflexible and slow. You can view a video of their concept at [this link](#) and a demo at [this link](#).

“We know that in Atlanta alone, people with disabilities take over 2,200 rides on public transportation [a day]. We talked to people with special needs in the community and learned that they have limited ability to travel independently or make spontaneous plans. There is a real need for flexible, affordable alternatives, especially for those who can’t afford a wheelchair accessible vehicle. We developed Para Pickup to help wheelchair users go wherever they want, whenever they want,” said Sally Xia, a member of the winning team.

“At Toyota, we are invested in creating better ways for people to move around, with a focus on helping communities with limited mobility to do more,” said Kristen Tabar, vice president, Technical Strategy and Planning Office, Toyota Motor North America, Research and Development. “The Para Pickup team spotted a problem that needs solving and came up with a smart, well thought-out plan to open up more opportunities for people who use wheelchairs. Congratulations to the team on their big win and please keep up the good work!”

“Net Impact’s goal is to give young people the tools to take on social challenges through creative thinking and entrepreneurship,” said Liz Maw, CEO of Net Impact. “Para Pickup took a thoughtful approach to understanding community needs and building a service that addressed them. We’re very proud of the team and look forward to seeing the progress they make!”

The multidisciplinary team of students included Sally Xia (Masters in Digital Media), Riley Keen (Masters in Industrial Design), Pranav Nair (Masters in Industrial and Product Design), and Kris Weng (Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering). The students have accepted summer internships through Net Impact in partnership with Toyota at the company’s North American headquarters in Plano, TX. They will support the Social Innovation team and continue to develop “Para Pickup” for the Toyota Mobility Foundation, which works to address mobility challenges around the world. The winners may then be considered for funding to bring their idea to life from the Toyota Mobility Foundation.

The Para Pickup team was chosen as winner by judges at Toyota and Net Impact based on six different categories: clarity of goals and objectives, clarity of project design, impact to society, feasibility, creativity and the team’s potential to implement the project. Additionally, the public weighed in on the winner through online voting, where Para Pickup also took first place.