Toyota Mobility Foundation and Urban Tech Hub Help Speed Growth for Accessibility and Active Mobility Innovators

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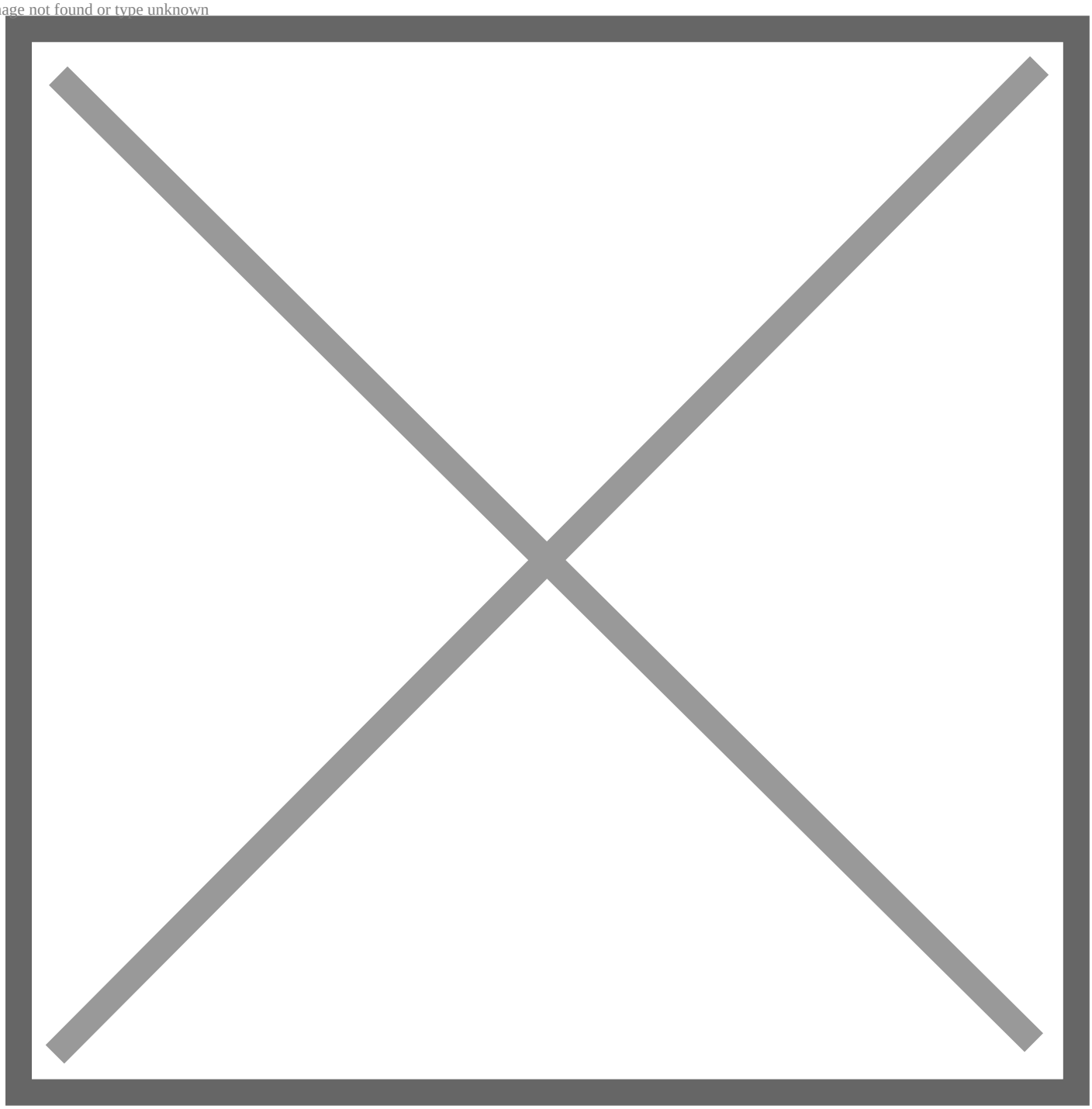

Mobility is personal. The freedom to get where we want to go empowers choice and helps us assert our individuality. But to open new or blocked roads to independence, it's often the power of groups that push progress to go further faster. For the tech startups pioneering the new Mobility Unlimited Hub, that hypothesis is being tested and proven in their mission to bring life-changing assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative personal mobility technology breakthroughs to those who need them now.

The Power of Cooperation

The Toyota Mobility Foundation (TMF) and North America's largest urban innovation hub, the MaRS Discovery District in Toronto, collaborated to create the first Mobility Unlimited Hub (MUH), which supports innovators from across the personal mobility field as they grow and scale their work. Forged in the spirit of connection, the hub fosters a fertile creative environment to help nurture the ecosystem aimed at bringing more sustainable and joyful movement to more people.

For more information about the collaboration, please watch the video below.

Founded in 2000 with the goal of giving researchers in biotech a platform to scale solutions for global impact, MaRS has since become a center for science and technology companies across sectors, from climate and health to emerging technologies.

Symbiosis Breeds Success

For the Toyota Mobility Foundation, the reach and resources of MaRS, the existing but unconnected stakeholders, and the support of Toronto Global offered a perfect fit for the task of accelerating active-mobility solutions to market.

"'It takes a village' is not a saying. It is reality. The hub ecosystem has generated expected and additional benefits from the holistic interactions we built into the program. By working together—and in parallel, the hub promotes engagement in ways that create synergy and add value. This helps unlock ideas that accelerate growth," says William Chernicoff, Ph.D., senior manager, Global Research and Innovation, Toyota Mobility Foundation.

By focusing on pre-growth-stage active mobility technologies, MUH fosters cutting-edge advancements with the potential for profound impact through devices such as exoskeletons to aid walking for children, advanced wheelchairs, paradigm changing rollators that prevent falls, sensors to improve wheelchair agility, AI-assisted sign language, and wireless charging for powered mobility aids.

Nonetheless, the companies are often hampered by the classic circular pattern to help complete the work, while at the same time, requiring completed work to attract resources.

"Growth is often slowed by common barriers and problems that are outside the control of innovation companies," says Dr. Chernicoff. "But what we're finding with the hub is that the stakeholders and startups help each other over hurdles thanks to the collective intelligence and resources of the group."

Coming Together for Impact

The first cohort was selected in 2024 from submissions to a call for entries from across Canada. While amplifying possibilities for Canadians with disabilities, integral to the project is the hub's ability to scale to the U.S., Japan, Asia, and Europe.

Indeed, the work of the hub unlocks more than just the freedom to move. The initiative is set to promote significant economic benefits as well, with improved mobility solutions expected to contribute more than $10 trillion US dollars to the global economy over the next 55 years.

“The Mobility Unlimited Hub is driving real momentum for innovators, not just in developing groundbreaking technologies, but in enabling ventures to grow their businesses,” says Grace Lee Reynolds, CEO, MaRS Discovery District. “With the exposure, visibility, and credibility provided by Toyota Mobility Foundation and MaRS, ventures are securing the funding, networks, and resources they need to scale, unlocking over $1 million in grants, and exceeding investor expectations. This isn’t just about commercialization. It’s about driving global impact. By accelerating breakthroughs and fostering economic growth, we’re helping these companies transform lives and reshape industries worldwide.”

The range of resources provided to participants includes marketing and public relations support, funding opportunities, and avenues for collaboration. The initiative is underpinned by a commitment to community engagement and a productive environment for startups and innovators in the active mobility sector.

“The reputation of MaRS and TMF has helped lend credibility to our branding and validated our efforts in the eyes of prospective investors and partners,” says Francis Beauchamp-Verdon, Co-Founder – VP & Director of Business development, AWL-Electricity. “We’ve also seen an almost immediate impact by joining the Mobility Unlimited Hub with our closing rate with customers and investors increasing by approximately 5%. To further increase our reputation and credibility, the PR support and media connections provided during our Paralympics partnership campaign has generated numerous leads to valuable potential customers.”

Toyota Mobility Foundation Connects the World
The Mobility Unlimited Hub is just one joint effort in TMF’s global mission to enable more people to go more places by sharing its knowledge and partnering with others for the good of all.

The MUH ecosystem model is already demonstrating its potency to accelerate growth. Four of the startups, Trexo Robotics, Cheelcare, AWL Electricity and Braze Mobility are working together in a novel, cross-venture cooperation to share knowledge and resources and push the boundaries of what inclusive mobility can achieve. The members of the first cohort report significant gains in product development, investment, and market growth within a far shorter timeline than would be possible without the influence and support of the hub.

Accelerating Access Serves Society
For all the groups, the faster their innovations are refined and scaled, the sooner people can adopt the technology, and in turn, advance positive outcomes for individuals and society. Improvements in mobility help more than just the individual using the device. Families, caregivers, employers, and other members of the community are aided and enriched by the personal freedom afforded by active-mobility technology.

Members of the First MUH Cohort:

- Trexo Robotics
- Cheelcare
- AWL Electricity
- Braze Mobility
- Deaf AI
- Axtion Independence Mobility

To learn more about how the Toyota Mobility Foundation and MaRS are making the world more accessible for all click here:

- https://www.marsdd.com/
- https://www.marsdd.com/service/mobility-unlimited-hub/
- https://toyotamobilityfoundation.org/en/