

Lockdown has made us rethink how we get around

All this time indoors has got us thinking about cheaper, greener and cleaner mobility. Tubes, buses and trains are a real go-to but don't feel hygienic at the best of times - let alone during a pandemic. Enter: a host of startups founded in lockdown to maximise on the pros of public transport, while also tackling the cons.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Recent research suggests that over half of Brits are looking for an alternative to public transport due to COVID-19. Car ownership is becoming more and more of a no-no - it's expensive and terrible for the environment - but disappearing bus and train routes in rural and suburban areas often leave people with no other option.

To quote Greg Gormley, CEO and co-founder of lift-sharing app SKOOT:

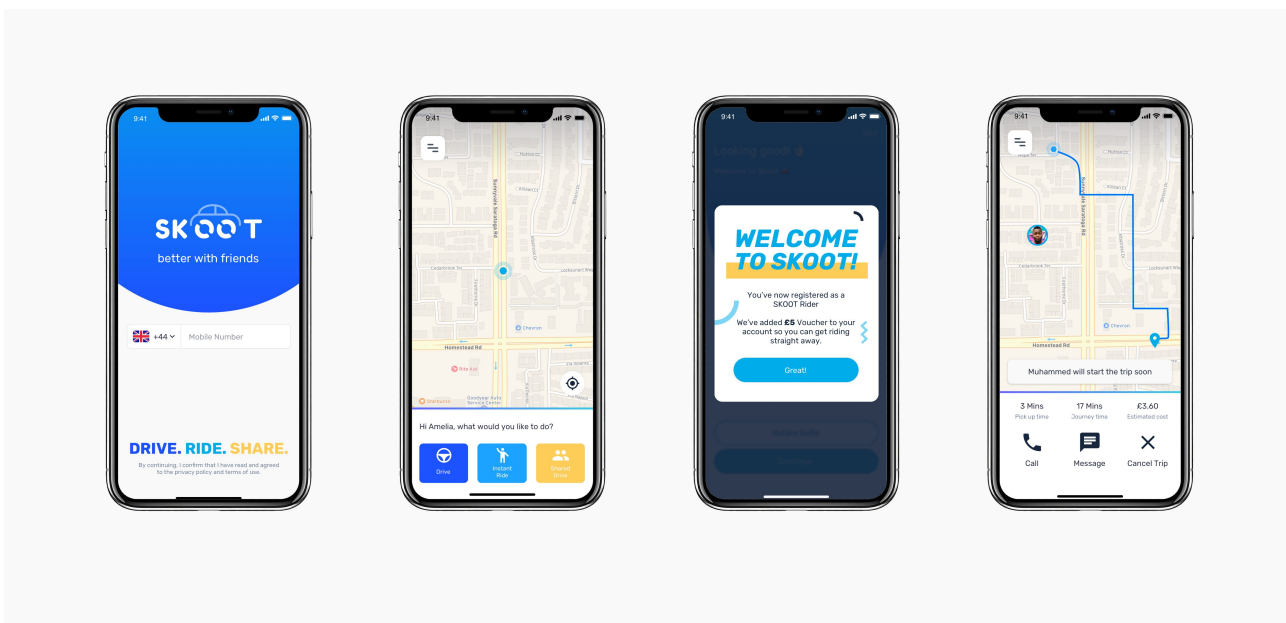
"It's never been more expensive to run a car - nor harder to get around, with the reduction in public transport routes, people not wanting to travel on buses, trains and tubes or even use ride-hailing apps due to COVID."

Greg's big idea - conceived alongside his daughter, who's been making money ferrying friends around in recent months - is an app that connects

friends that drive with friends that need lifts. SKOOT is, in his words, “a simple lift-sharing solution to help solve these issues, without any need for the driver to have specialist car insurance or the rider to be concerned with whom they are being picked up by.”

SKOOT ensures safety by checking each driver’s car, ensuring they have valid tax and MOT. Drivers have to scan their driving licence onto the app, which is then checked to make sure drivers don’t fall foul of ‘money for miles’ laws. These can cause their car insurance to be null and void, potentially carrying a £2,500 fine if too much money is paid for a single journey.

Alongside its convenience and low cost, ride-sharing is much greener than driving with empty spaces in your car. But SKOOT has opted to (pardon the pun) go the extra mile and offset all carbon used by 110%, planting a tree every three rides. This makes it the first and only carbon-negative lift-sharing app.



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But what about quitting cars altogether? Though only really available in big cities at the moment, e-bikes are definitely having a moment.

Alongside Uber's now-ubiquitous JUMP bikes, Londoners may have seen new bottle green bikes lining the streets of Camden and Islington.

HumanForest, the startup behind these lean green machines, launched at the end of June. Their zero-emissions e-bikes run entirely on renewable energy and were designed to "get our great city moving again" in the most affordable, efficient and sustainable way possible.

Currently in a trial phase, HumanForest permits 20 minutes free-riding (with no unlocking fee) daily and then charge 12p a minute for city-wide cycling. If the trial is a success, bike numbers look set to increase across and beyond London.

"The transformation towards a more sustainable society has accelerated in recent months and transport is a very real way for Londoners to make a difference, not just to the environment but to their wellbeing too.", says HumanForest co-founder Caroline Seton.

"Cars are responsible for 60% of all transport-related emissions. Yet two thirds of car trips made by Londoners could be cycled in under 19 minutes."

Though HumanForest just yesterday announced a hiatus to make important improvements to its e-bike, the COVID-19 period has seen them attract funding from leaders in the mobility space. At the start of September, the group announced £1.8M in investment from figures including Juan de Antonio and Vicente Pascual, who founded Cabify - the first profitable ride-sharing platform.

It seems that whether you're getting from A to B in the countryside or the big city - whether you're into micro-mobility or looking to travel with friends - these lockdown entrepreneurs have got your back. Safe journey!



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