

# **RIDESHARE OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN NORTH AMERICA**



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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## The Problem and the Solution

This proposal explores the viability in North America of a mobile application called Smart Ride, which will coordinate P2P chauffeur services for children with disabilities. Existing P2P Transportation Network Companies (or ridesharing services) have not demonstrated an interest in providing services for children with disabilities. There are about three million minors with disabilities in the United States, many of whom could contribute more to society if they had transportation that catered to their specific needs. This particular product will, unlike existing services aimed at minors, allow for drivers to account for the specific needs of children with disabilities.

## Competitive Advantage

Smart Ride's key advantage is in its basic, exclusive attention to a population that falls between the cracks of other companies' targeted demographics. There are no existing private rideshare services that cater specifically to the needs of children with disabilities. Of existing rideshare companies that service minors, Zum Services based out of Redwood City, CA was the only company that seemed to consider the needs of children with disabilities. It stands to reason that a company that does not set out from the very beginning to always consider the needs of those with disabilities, will be tempted to ignore those needs eventually, as the major rideshare companies have in the past.

## 2. COMPANY OVERVIEW

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Media newsfeeds are full of fear-based predictions of robot takeovers, artificial intelligence domination, and a society of screen-addicted zombies. In the midst of these fears we can start to lose hope and forget that technology and human innovation have, since the discovery of fire, largely improved human life in both length and quality. At the same time, as is often the case, technological influencers tend to market their products and services to the elite, thus exacerbating the widening divisions of society into haves and have-nots. But it doesn't have to be that way. **We can do better.**

We are [Hilma](#). We are an Israeli-based team of entrepreneurs, tech gurus, and young and passionate developers. We reject the fearful narratives of the future, and imagine a world where technology, united with a deep listening to the needs of society, can actually contribute to a better world. We apply innovative thinking earned through decades of experience on the frontiers of technological development to solve the problems of traditionally under-served populations.

Our partners are high-tech companies and educational and socially conscious institutions who share our mission of applying the seemingly limitless potential of technology to solve the day-to-day problems faced by children, the elderly, and people with physical and mental disabilities, illnesses, and hyper sensitivities. We are also supported by the government of Israel to achieve a real PPP working model.

We aim to become one of the leading developers of social tech in Israel and the world by returning the human to the focus of technology.

*“The moral test of [a society] is how [it] treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life; the sick, the needy and the handicapped.”*

*Hubert Humphrey,  
US Vice President  
1965-1969*

### 3. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: AN EXCLUDED POPULATION

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In the past four years Transportation Network Companies (more commonly labeled “Ridesharing” services) (e.g. Uber, Lyft) have become a familiar option for personal transportation for a mostly urban population in the USA. A [2018 Pew Research Center survey](#) noted a 21% increase of U.S. adults who say they have used ride-hailing services, from about 15% in 2015 to 36%. These survey-based numbers may be overly conservative, relying as they do on active survey responses. [Statistics based on analysis of credit card transactions](#) reveal a much larger proportion of the population (about 43%) has adopted ride-sharing apps. Clearly, interest in and accessibility of ridesharing is increasing.

[Research and Development](#) on the problems potentials of the ridesharing market tend to focus on modifying the structure of the vehicles themselves to better accommodate the needs of shoppers and business professionals.

However, there are two segments of the population, namely the disabled and children, that have not been well-served by many of these services.

Some rideshare services (detailed in the next section) have recognized the demand for services that cater to minors. With few exceptions, however, those services do hold the mission of serving minors with disabilities. People with disabilities are increasingly being reintroduced into mainstream society, following years of social othering and stigmatization. They, and their caretakers, constitute an untapped potential consumer base for an alternative, peer-to-peer ride-sharing service, one especially suited for their needs.

Aside from these ordinary bottom-line considerations, a successful implementation of a ride-sharing app for the disabled may result in vast changes to society, continuing to increase the visibility and autonomy of a once invisible population, and indirectly contributing to the diversity of the workforce. A triple bottom-line is therefore possible.

## 4. US MARKET ANALYSIS

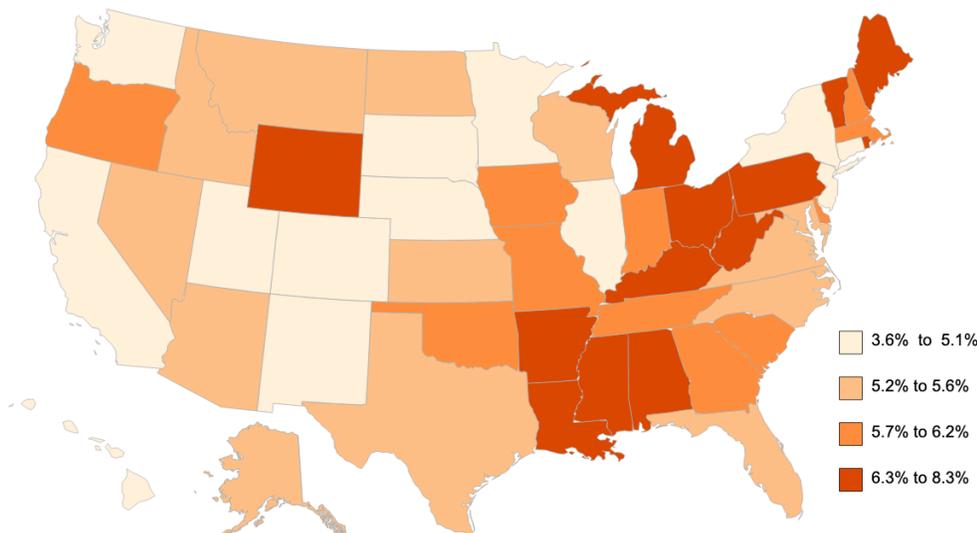
### Specific Demographic

Determining the actual number of children with disabilities in the US is made more difficult by the fact that various surveys have differing definitions of disability. The most robust survey available, the American Community Survey, defines disability as a positive response to any one of six questions (see Appendix A). This survey also excludes from its study individuals who are institutionalized. The remainder of data in this analysis is drawn from the ACS.

Exact demographics for persons with disabilities by age are not available for 2019 or 2018, but an [earlier report, based on data from 2016](#), estimates that 12.8% of the population are persons with disabilities. 7.3% of this population fall between the ages of 5 to 17. Assuming a population of 323.4 million in 2016, it is reasonable to estimate that there were about 41.4 million persons with disabilities in the US, of which about 3 million were minors.

### Breakdown by State

**FIG 6. People with Disabilities Ages 5-17 Years Living in the Community, by State, 2016**



Source: Kraus, L., Lauer, E., Coleman, R., and Houtenville, A. (2018). *2017 Disability Statistics Annual Report*. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire.

As can be seen in the above figure, the greatest concentration of children with disabilities is present in the eastern and southern United States. This is possibly attributable to the presence of existing infrastructure. New York has a conspicuously low score, which may be due to the high cost of living in the state making it prohibitively difficult to live there, though this theory is belied by the relatively high concentration in the north eastern states.

### Rideshare services marketed toward children

There are, at present, two main obstacles to existing rideshare services providing adequate services for children with disabilities: 1) A general policy against providing services for minors (Uber's policy [here](#); Lyft's [here](#)), and 2) bottom-up discrimination against those with disabilities.

Due to a demand for a safe "Uber for kids", a number of rideshare platforms have arisen with a focus specifically on offering services for children.

HopSkipDrive  
Zum  
VANGo  
Kango  
Bubbl

Many of these companies have similar features. What sets them apart from Uber and Lyft is a heavy vetting process and the requirement that their drivers have at least 3 years of caregiving/nurturing experience. These companies are in various late phases of funding, and the market seems to be growing.

### Rideshare services for persons with disabilities

If Uber, Lyft, and other conventional TNCs ever recognize and capitalize on the high demand for services for pre-teens, they could by default become major competitors against any program serving minors with disabilities since they are required by US Law to serve the disabled. A number of legal issues with implications on this are presently under discussion in the courts.

According to contemporary US Law, discrimination against persons with disabilities is illegal, but this has not prevented a number of disabled persons seeking rideshare services from facing unfair treatment ([Virginia 2018](#), [New York 2018](#)). Many Uber and Lyft drivers refuse service when they become aware that the fare is a person with disabilities, especially when the person is in a wheelchair or has a service animal. This has led to a number of minor suits filed against Uber and Lyft. In response to these concerns Uber has launched a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle program (WAV), but users complain that there aren't enough WAVs and the accommodation is more or less lip-service.

The companies say they are not transportation companies, and thus they are not required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A related legal debate (O'Connor v. Uber Technology) over whether drivers for Uber are classifiable as workers, has implications for this decision. If rideshare drivers are classifiable as employees, this means they will be subject to greater ADA oversight, which in turn means Uber and Lyft may become viable options for the disabled in the future.

### Specific needs of the community built into the app

Smart Ride, in its attempt to make provisions for minors with disabilities, takes into account the problems listed above. To satisfy the concerns of parents and guardians who are entrusting

their children to the care of others, the app provides an easy to manage user interface which allows parents to track where their children are at all times.

Additionally, the app allows parents to communicate specific needs and sensitivities that their children may have to drivers in advance.

## APPENDIX A: THE SIX DISABILITY QUESTIONS IN THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

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1. Is this person deaf or does he/she have serious difficulty hearing?
2. Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?
3. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?
4. Does this person have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
5. Does this person have difficulty dressing or bathing?
6. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?