First Pickup

A UX case study on route-matched pickup for bulky secondhand deals in Metro Vancouver.

How might we make handing off a bulky-item pickup feel as safe and affordable as asking a friend?

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CUXD 214 · Emily Carr University of Art + Design
Team project with Sean · 2026

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What this document covers

This is the process write-up. The investor deck is a separate document. What follows records what we asked, what the research came back with, the decision that changed the product, and what we would do differently.

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02	**Research**	Survey, interviews, community research, competitive scan
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04	**Personas**	Lai, Mei, and Jason
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My contribution

What I owned

Customer research: the survey instrument, the community and competitive analysis, and the market sizing. Low and mid fidelity design. The design system, the brand, and the investor deck.

Shared and Sean's

Sean and I worked out the service workflow and the three user flows together. Sean built the high fidelity prototype and ran two of the three user interviews.

01 · PROBLEM

Pickup is where secondhand deals fall apart.

People across Metro Vancouver buy and sell bulky things on Facebook Marketplace constantly. When the item is a couch, a desk, or a fridge, moving it from their place to yours is the part nobody has a plan for.

Where we started

The first problem statement, written before any research:

People in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland often buy bulky secondhand items online but don't have safe, affordable, and trustworthy ways to get them home, since current delivery options aren't built for marketplace transactions and offer no escrow or protection for buyers and sellers.

And the how-might-we that followed it:

How might we help people who buy and sell secondhand items online safely complete transactions, especially bulky items, by combining vetted local delivery help with an escrow-style payment system?

Read that second one again. It contains its own answer. We had settled on escrow before speaking to anybody, and the project was called **Payments Pending** because of it.

Where we landed

People with bulky items to sell hate the pickup and handoff, but they won't pay to fix it, because no option feels trustworthy and affordable enough to beat just asking a friend.

How might we make handing off a bulky-item pickup feel as safe and affordable as asking a friend?

What moved

The money came out of the statement. And the competitor changed: no longer expensive movers, but a friend with a truck, who works for free.

The alternatives people already use

NO TRUCK

A couch does not fit in a Civic. People rent from Home Depot, book Modo, or wait on a friend.

NO TIME

Coordinating pickup eats evenings and weekends. Then the other person stops replying and it starts again.

TOO MUCH WORK

Stairs, lifting, straps, a rental booking. Plenty of people just skip the deal.

02 · RESEARCH

Four methods, run in a worse order than I'd choose again.

METHOD	WHAT IT WAS
Survey	Typeform, distributed through r/vancouver, campus channels, and local buy-and-sell groups. **Six responses, four qualified** after screening for people who had bought or sold secondhand in the past year. Questions anchored to the last real transaction, with the concept questions held back to the end.
Interviews	Three walk-me-through conversations about the last bulky buy or sale, the worst experience, and the moment they backed out of a deal. One by me, two by Sean.
Community	An r/vancouver thread asking how to move Marketplace furniture without a car. The replies are a ranked list of the alternatives we were competing against.
Competitive	Lugg, Dolly, and Roadie, none of which operate in Canada. TaskRabbit. The local van-booking apps. Sharetown and Kaiyo as business-model references.

What the survey came back with

4 of 4

ranked pickup and delivery the worst part of buying or selling secondhand

4 of 4

chose a delivery and pickup service as the most appealing feature we could offer

4 of 4

said they would not hire help to move something heavy

1 of 4

has ever paid for pickup help, and paid under twenty dollars

Those four numbers do not agree with each other, and that disagreement is the finding the whole project turns on. Strong stated demand. Almost no revealed demand. We kept it in and stopped trying to explain it away.

Why they wouldn't pay, in their words

> “ don't know a reputable company that offers affordable help

> “ I would ask people I know first

> “ Cost

Three different objections: trust, a free default that already works, and price. A paid service has to beat all three at once.

Safety looks like a non-issue, and isn't

All four said they **rarely** feel unsafe at a meet-up. Then three of four bring someone with them, two inspect before paying, two insist on a public place, and not one selected nothing different.

Nobody described feeling unsafe, and almost everybody had a precaution. People have built their own defences, which is exactly why it doesn't register as fear when you ask them directly. That distinction changed how we designed the handoff.

What the community thread added

Asked how to move furniture without a car, commenters offered Modo, U-Haul and Home Depot rentals, paying the seller to deliver, hiring someone local with a truck, and borrowing from friends or family, sometimes settled with food or a favour. One recurring warning about bedbugs, which nothing else in our research surfaced.

Five unrelated workarounds for one job. That is the shape of the problem.

Limitations

Small sample, and I would rather say so than dress it up. Six responses with four qualifying is enough to find a direction and nowhere near enough to size a market.

The sample skews to buyers. All four qualified respondents buy and three also sell, so the seller's side of the handoff has been inferred and never observed. Everything is self-reported, and the gap between what people said and what they had actually paid sits inside our own data as a warning about that.

The biggest hole: **we never surveyed a driver.** Not one question about the supply side of a two-sided marketplace.

03 · THE PIVOT

We thought payment was the hard part.

Research moved us upstream, to pickup, trust, and who is already on the road.

0 of 4

chose escrow

Respondents could pick as many features as they wanted. Nobody picked escrow. All four picked pickup and delivery. On a question where selecting it cost them nothing, not one person did.

Logistics first

For bulky items, pickup was the top friction by a distance. Escrow became interesting later, not the thing anybody was stuck on.

Money gets simpler under pressure

Three of four use e-transfer day to day. Over $150, three of four switch to cash. People get more analog as the stakes rise. A payment product would want the reverse.

Ride the trip

Someone is already headed that way. Matching a haul to a trip that is happening anyway keeps the fee low enough to matter.

So Payments Pending became **First Pickup**, and the money moved out of the product. Item payment stays between buyer and seller on whatever channel they already use. We charge for the haul and nothing else.

This is the decision the rest of the design depends on, and it came out of a single survey question that nobody answered.

Source: First Pickup survey, Typeform, June 2026. Six responses, four qualified.

04 · PERSONAS

Three roles. One handoff.

One persona per user flow. Every trait traces to a survey respondent, an interview, or the community research, and anything unevidenced says so on the card.

Customer

Lai · buying

"I bought a couch on Marketplace. I just need it at my place."

One flat haul price. Pay with Apple Pay. Someone already going that way.

CONTEXT

27, East Vancouver, rents a one-bedroom, no vehicle. Buys secondhand about monthly, usually $50–150, and has spent over $1,000 on a single item.

GOAL

Get a good deal home without owning a truck or owing anyone a favour.

TODAY

Filters listings by what fits in a car or what she can carry. Asks the seller to deliver. Falls back on friends and family. Meets in public where she can.

FRUSTRATIONS

Rules items out on size before price. The haul can cost as much as the item. Coordinating a borrowed vehicle around someone else's weekend. Won't pay a service she can't vouch for.

EVIDENCE

S4 buys only, monthly, "Dunno" on hiring help, only buys what he can carry · S3 friend or family, "I would ask people I know first" · r/vancouver thread

GROUNDED

Customer

Mei · selling

"Sold three things this month. Buyers keep flaking on pickup."

Get sold stuff to the buyer without hauling it herself. Same app, same flat rates.

CONTEXT

31, Mount Pleasant, has a car but not a truck. Buys and sells from a few times a year to monthly, typically $20–150.

GOAL

Turn things she no longer wants into cash without losing weekends to it.

TODAY

Uses her own vehicle or borrows one, and has rented a van for a bigger piece. Hands the item over as payment lands, or on trust.

FRUSTRATIONS

Buyers who agree a time and don't show. Repeating details across every thread. Has paid for help once, under $20. No option she considers both reputable and affordable.

EVIDENCE

S1 "don't know a reputable company that offers affordable help", rented a van, sold a table · S6 paid once under $20, "Cost" · no-shows "sometimes" for 3 of 4

GROUNDED

The Transporter

Jason · Transporter

"I drive Van to Whistler anyway. Easy cash if it's on my route."

See his zones and routes. Jobs sorted by time and area. Photos then pay.

CONTEXT

34, Surrey, owns a pickup. Already works gig apps and drives the same corridors most weeks.

GOAL

Earn on trips he is already making, without a job turning into an ordeal.

TODAY

Takes short, clearly specified jobs and avoids anything vague. Judges a job on pay, distance, and whether he'll be carrying it up three flights.

FRUSTRATIONS

Surprises at the door: stairs, size, access. Pay that isn't clear before he accepts. Disputes with no evidence and no support to call. Dead miles that don't pay.

EVIDENCE

Not surveyed. The Typeform never asked about the driver side. Built from the r/vancouver thread, Sharetown's gig model, and the competitive scan.

PROVISIONAL

05 · JOURNEY MAP

Lai buys a couch. Then she has to get it home.

The journey as it runs today, before First Pickup. Stage three is where it collapses, and it isn't close.

01 Find the item

EXCITED

DOING	THINKING	PAIN	OPPORTUNITY
Scrolls Marketplace. Finds a couch twenty minutes away at a price worth having.	"Great price, but how would I even get it home?"	Size and distance get weighed before price. Good items are skipped before anyone opens the listing.	Quote a flat haul price at the moment of interest, before the deal is made.

02 Agree the deal

DEFLATED

DOING	THINKING	PAIN	OPPORTUNITY
Messages the seller and agrees on price. Seller says pickup only.	"Pickup only. So the hard part is mine."	The haul becomes the buyer's problem the moment the price is agreed, and no one planned for it.	Request a haul from inside the deal. Buying or selling, one flow, one price.

03 Figure out the haul

STUCK

DOING	THINKING	PAIN	OPPORTUNITY
Texts friends with trucks. Checks Modo and EVO. Prices a U-Haul. Asks whether the seller delivers.	"Do I know anyone free Saturday? Is a van rental worth it for a $120 couch?"	Four unrelated options, none built for a single item. The haul can cost as much as the couch.	★ One flat price by size, quoted before booking. $15 / $35 / $65.

04 Coordinate

ANXIOUS

DOING	THINKING	PAIN	OPPORTUNITY
Settles a window with the seller and with whoever is driving. Sends the address.	"If they don't show, I've burned a Saturday and a rental."	No-shows and mixed messages are routine, and the cost lands on whoever booked the vehicle.	Book a named transporter already headed that way, with a support reference from the start.

05 The handoff

WARY

DOING	THINKING	PAIN	OPPORTUNITY
Meets a stranger at the curb. Inspects the couch. Pays. Lifts it into the vehicle.	"Check it before I send the money."	Lifting, stairs, and cash in hand with a stranger. Safety is managed by bringing someone, not felt.	★ Photo check-in at pickup and dropoff. Item money stays between buyer and seller.

06 It's home

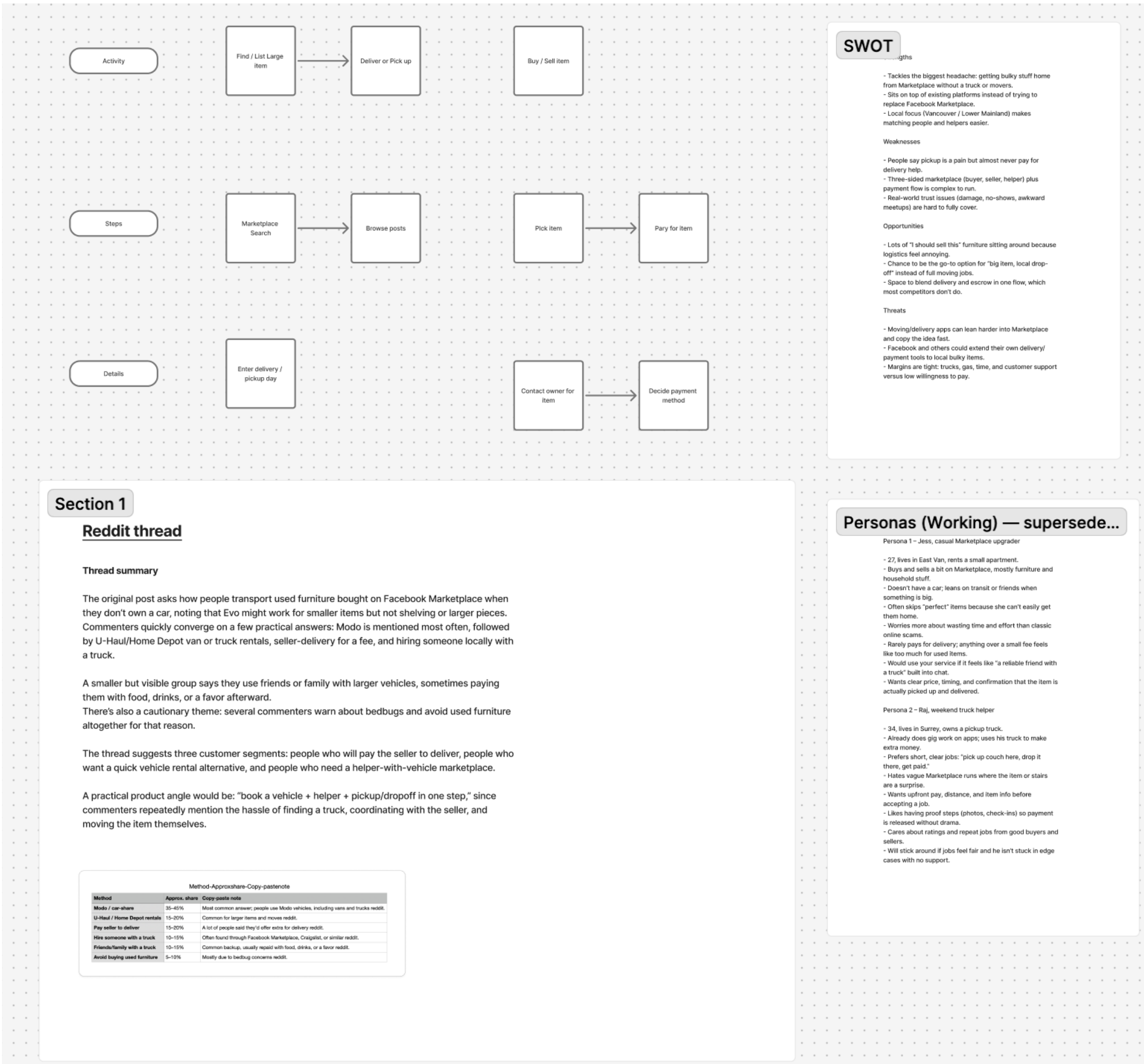
RELIEVED

DOING	THINKING	PAIN	OPPORTUNITY
Couch is in the apartment. Nothing recorded, nothing rated, no one to call next time.	"That worked out. I'd still rather not do it again."	Nothing carries over. The next bulky item starts from zero.	★ Live Activity tracks the item to the door. The rating feeds the route network.

★ marks a moment of delight, each mapped to a screen in the prototype. Evidence for each stage sits on the working board.

From FigJam flows to a clickable prototype.

Everything upstream of the wireframes lived on one FigJam board: the service swimlane of activity, steps and details on the left, the SWOT beside it, the r/vancouver thread and its method breakdown below, and the first pass at personas on the right. Jess and Raj became Lai and Jason once the three flows settled.



Working board · flows, SWOT, community research, and the first persona pass

From board to build

STAGE	WHAT HAPPENED
Flows	Sean and I mapped Lai, Mei, and Jason in FigJam before any screens existed, first as a swimlane of activity, steps, and details, then as three role flows.
Low fidelity	Paper and rough frames testing one question: can the request be three steps? Two generations of wires, the second built around a flat quote.
Mid fidelity	Layout, hierarchy, and the request sequence. The flat-rate size picker replaced a quote form here, because a quote you have to wait for reintroduces the coordination we were trying to remove.
Design system	Five core colours, an iOS-native type ramp, hairline cards, 44pt minimum targets, documented as a brand guide so we could work in parallel without the screens drifting.
Prototype	Sean built the full high fidelity flow: three roles, empty states, error states, confirmation dialogs, Live Activities, and Dynamic Island states.

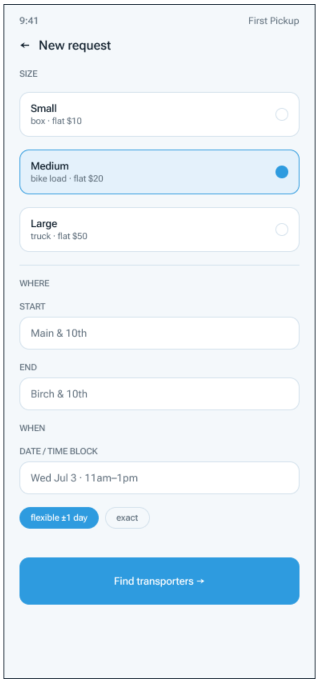
Decisions tied back to research

- **Customers never choose a route mode.** They enter from, to, size, and when. The app does the matching. Nobody in research thought in terms of corridors; drivers do.
- **Flat fees by size rather than per-kilometre or surge.** People already flinch at paying anything, and a number that moves while you look at it is a reason to close the app.
- **Home changes by role.** Getting, Delivering, or Both. Same components, different job.
- **Item money stays off-app.** Straight out of the zero-escrow finding.

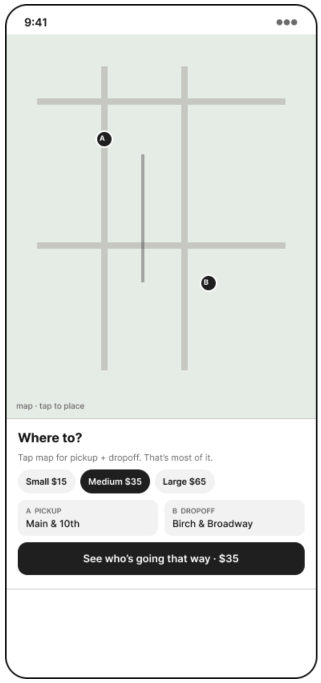
Three generations of the same request.

The wireframes below are mine. Each generation changed one structural idea. None of them were restyles, and each change traces back to something the research told us.

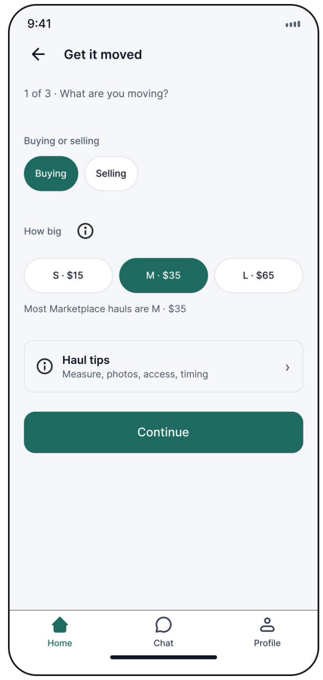
Asking for a haul



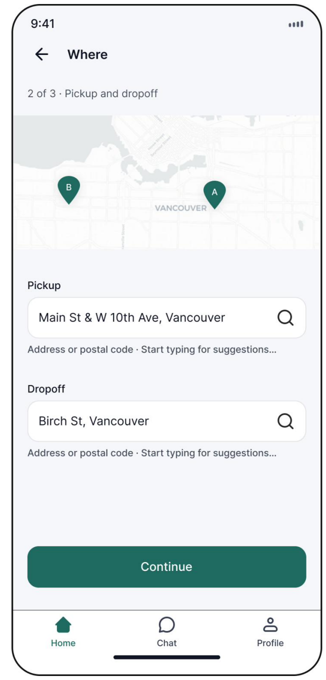
Low fi · form



Mid fi · map



High fi · what

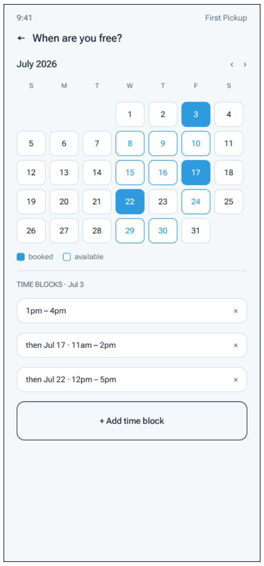


High fi · where

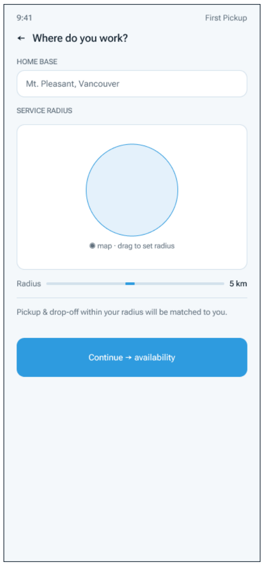
Generation one asked for size, start, end, date, and a flexibility toggle on a single scrolling form. It worked, and it looked like a booking form for a moving company, which is the thing people told us they avoid. Generation two collapsed the whole request onto a map with three price chips and one button: See who's going that way · $35. Generation three split it into two light steps so the size decision and the address entry never compete for attention.

The phrase on that mid fidelity button is the moment the product found its idea. Once the request was about who is already going that way, the transporter side had to be rebuilt to match.

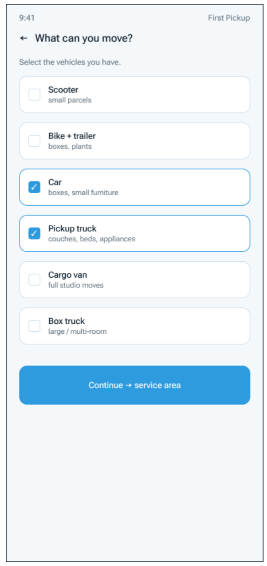
Setting up as a transporter



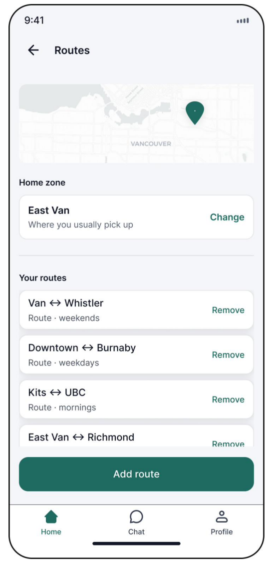
Low fi · when



Low fi · radius



Low fi · vehicles

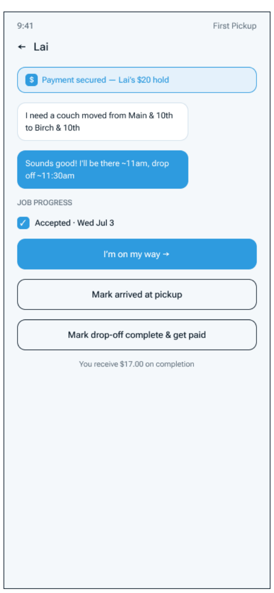


High fi · routes

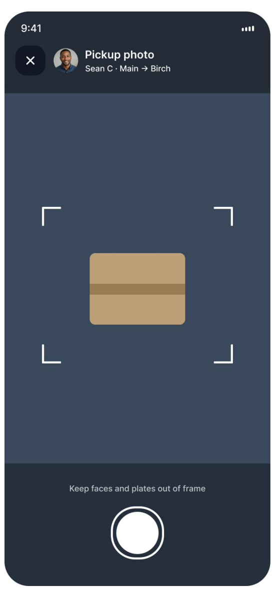
This is the largest change in the project. The low fidelity transporter set Jason up as a small business: a calendar of free time blocks, a home base with a service radius, and a vehicle list. It asks a driver to advertise availability and then wait inside a circle.

Jason does not have availability. He has a commute. Replacing the calendar and the radius with named corridors, Van ↔ Whistler, Downtown ↔ Burnaby, Kits ↔ UBC, is what makes the fee affordable, because a job on a trip already happening costs the driver almost nothing. The economics and the interface arrived at the same time.

Proving the job happened



Low fi · self-reported



High fi · photo check-in

Low fidelity had Jason tap Mark arrived at pickup and Mark drop-off complete. Both are claims, and neither helps the person on the other end who has never met him. The safety finding pushed this to a photo at each end: evidence rather than assertion, and something to point at when a dispute happens.

WHAT CHANGED	FROM → TO	WHY
Request shape	Scrolling form → map with price chips → two light steps	A booking form reads like hiring movers. Research said people avoid that category entirely.
Matching basis	Availability calendar and service radius → named routes	Drivers think in corridors, not circles. Route matching is what makes the fee small enough to compete with a friend.
Proof of work	Self-reported status taps → photo check-in at both ends	People already bring someone and inspect before paying. The design gives them evidence.
Item money	Pre-authorised hold covering the job → haul fee only, item paid in person	Nobody selected escrow, and payment gets more analog as the amount rises.
Pricing	$10 / $20 / $50 → $15 / $35 / $65	Rebuilt from the driver's side once route matching was in: the low fidelity numbers left too little after the platform share to be worth a stop.

Where the low fidelity still leads

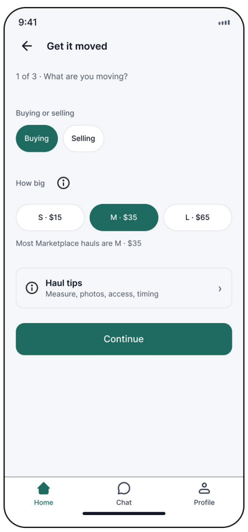
Two ideas in the early wireframes never made it into the prototype and deserve to. The transporter Requests list showed a payout figure and an availability match on the same card, which is a faster read than the current job offer. And Booking declined tells the customer the request has been passed to someone else, so nobody is left at a dead end. The high fidelity flow does not handle this yet.

07 · DESIGN SOLUTION

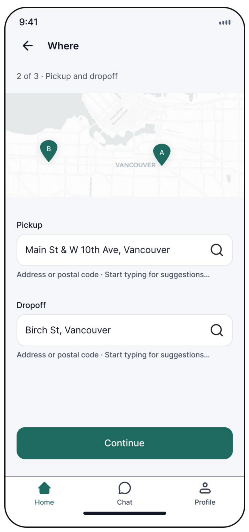
Going that way? Carry something and get paid.

Three flows off one home screen. The customer sets what and where. The transporter sets a route once and receives jobs that fit it.

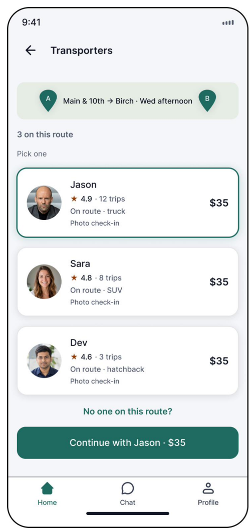
Requesting a haul



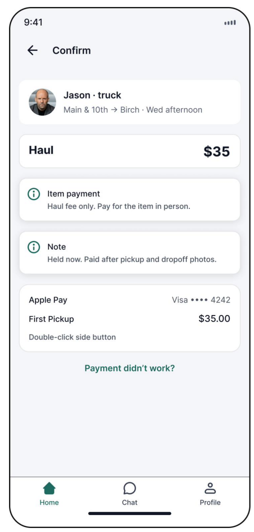
What



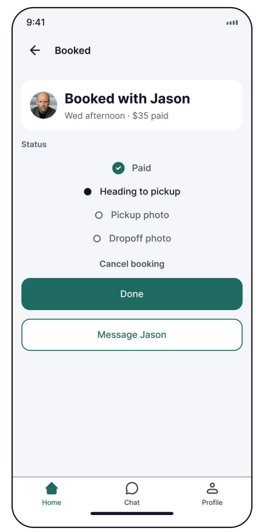
Where



Matches



Confirm



Booked

Size is a three-way choice with the price on the button: $15 small, $35 medium, $65 large. The Confirm screen states plainly that the fee covers the haul only and the item is paid for in person. People have to read that line correctly for any of this to work, which is why it is the first thing we test.

How a haul pays out

$15 / $35 / $65

flat haul by size. Small is a box or a scooter load, medium a chair or a bike, large a couch or a dresser. Medium covers the typical Marketplace pickup.

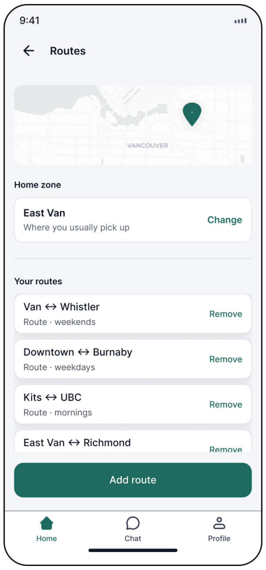
$28

of a $35 medium haul goes to the transporter, roughly 80%, earned on a trip they were making anyway

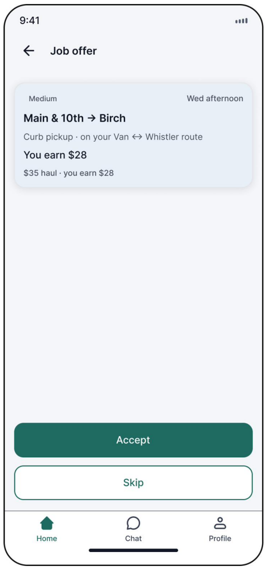
$7

platform share, covering processing, support, and the match. Item money never enters the app.

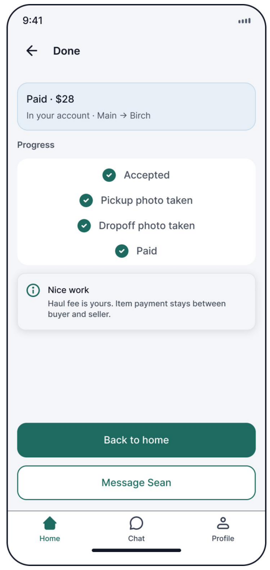
Driving a route



Routes



Job offer



Done

Jason sets a home zone and his regular corridors first, then receives jobs that fit them. The offer states earnings before he accepts: $28 of the $35. Route matching is what keeps the fee low enough to compete with a friend who works for free.

Trust without escrow

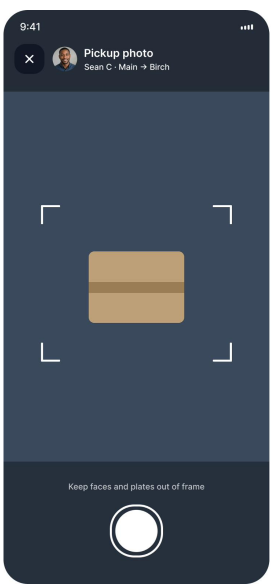
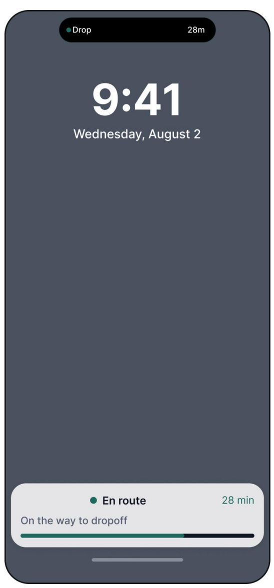


Photo check-in



Live Activity

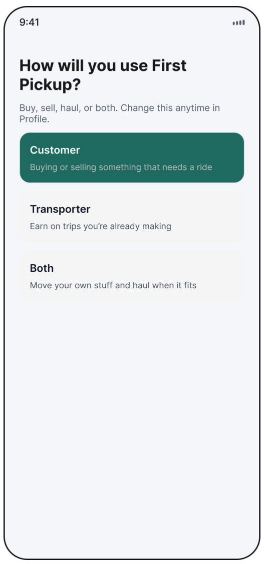
Photo check-in at both ends of the job, ratings, and in-app chat. It came out of the safety finding directly: people already bring a friend and inspect before paying, so the design gives them evidence rather than reassurance. Money for the item stays between buyer and seller.

08 · TESTING AND ITERATION

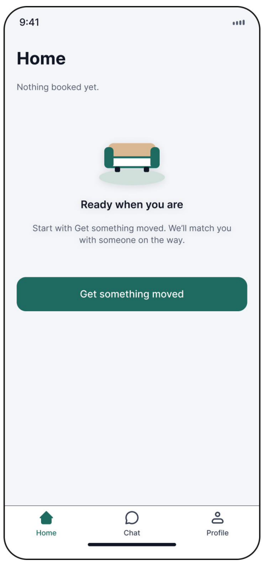
We pressure-tested the prototype, then went looking for strangers.

Walkthroughs

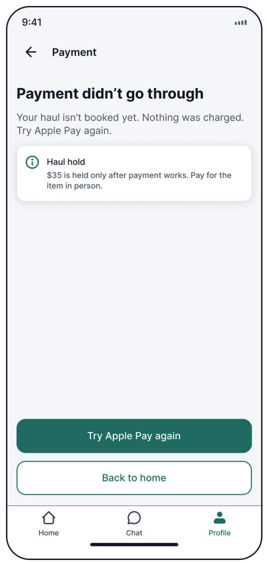
Structured walkthroughs with the team and with peers, aimed at finding broken paths, missing screens, and confusing first-run moments before the pitch. Unscripted and unrecorded, so the results can't be compared across people. Four changes came out of them:



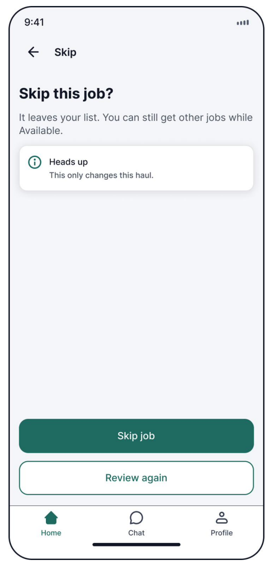
Role split



Empty state



Payment failed



Skip confirm

WHAT BROKE	WHAT CHANGED
Onboarding	Role choice was fuzzy and people couldn't tell whether they were booking a haul or offering one. We split customer and transporter onboarding and made the home mode follow that choice.
Empty states	A first-run Getting home looked unfinished. We added empty homes for no haul yet, no active haul, and no nearby match, so the product still explains itself with nothing in it.
Error states	Failed payment and the cancel and skip confirmations were missing and walkthroughs stalled there. We added all four.
Missing pages	Help, history, and rating had no home. They do now.

Structured sessions

The walkthroughs found broken paths. They can't tell us whether a stranger understands the product, so a second round runs with people outside the team.

ELEMENT	DESIGN
Participants	Five. Three who have bought or sold something bulky in the past year, and two who drive a regular route or own a truck. The drivers do double duty: they test the transporter flow and close the evidence gap on Jason.
Task 1	You've agreed to buy a couch for $120, seller at Main and 10th, you're on Birch, Wednesday afternoon. Sort out getting it home.
Task 2	The transporter is at the seller's place now. Show me what you'd expect to happen next.
Task 3	You drive into Vancouver from Surrey most weekdays. Set yourself up to earn on hauls along that route, then deal with the first job offered.
Probe	Phone away: walk me through the money. Who pays who, when, and who's holding it in between?

That last question is the one that matters. The whole model rests on people understanding that the fee buys the haul and nothing else, and a single line of microcopy is all that explains it.

09 · OUTCOMES

What we can claim, and what we can't.

Nothing has shipped, so there is no market outcome to report and this document doesn't invent one. We have a business case sized to test the open question. Funding the operation comes after that.

$9M

Metro Vancouver serviceable market for bulky hauls, built bottom-up from roughly $130M of peer-to-peer resale

$270K

first-year gross transaction value target across two or three corridors

$250K

build estimate, three to six months, for a two-sided app with payments and an admin tool

The pilot is scoped to answer one question. One submarket, roughly a thousand completed handoffs, and three metrics that settle it: paid conversion, cost per acquisition, and contribution margin per pickup. If people will not pay, we find out for $250,000 instead of for a great deal more.

10 · LESSONS

Four things worth carrying forward.

We named the wrong problem, and the name recorded it

Payments Pending was an answer, not a question. Escrow appeared in our first how-might-we before we had spoken to a single person, and four people later not one of them wanted it. Writing a solution into the problem statement is the failure mode. Next time I would check whether the how-might-we can be answered more than one way before committing to it.

Stated demand and paid demand are different quantities

Everyone in our survey said pickup was the worst part. Everyone said they would like a service that fixed it. Nobody would pay for it, and one person had ever paid anything at all. A free option with poor reliability beats a paid option with good reliability when the paid one isn't trusted. The brief that came out of that is harder than the one we started with, and more honest.

We researched one side of a two-sided market

Every survey question addressed customers. Jason exists because the business model needs him to, and his persona card says so in red. In a marketplace, supply is not a supporting character. That is the mistake I would most want back.

Order the methods properly

We wrote a survey before running interviews, which meant the questions were built on guesses about what mattered. Interviews first would have told us escrow was dead before we spent a question on it.

Sources and appendix

- Survey instrument and full responses. Typeform, June 2026, six responses, four qualified.
- Interview notes, three participants.
- Working board: flows, SWOT, journey map, persona evolution.
- Competitive analysis: Lugg, Dolly, Roadie, TaskRabbit, VanDeliveryApp, Tingsapp, TwentyFourr, Sharetown, Kaiyo.
- r/vancouver thread on moving Marketplace furniture without a car.
- Brand and design system guide.
- Usability test plan and findings sheet. To add.
- Build cost range: Will Coulter, Databending, How Much Does It Cost to Build a Mobile App in Canada, 2026.