

Navigating the “Kiss’n’Go” Lane

How Research Validated and Expanded EverDriven’s School Staff Market Opportunity



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The Business Context

EverDriven identified teachers as a potential growth market. The initial plan was to wrap District Portal functionality into a mobile app for teachers.

Why This Market Mattered

The Alternate Student Transportation market identifies three main user personas: districts, drivers, and parents. The teacher/school staff persona was overlooked, but they're often on the ground receiving students. An app for this persona group would be unique to the market, allowing EverDriven to stand out.

What We Need to Validate

Before development investment, we needed to validate both the market opportunity and solution approach.

The Access Problem We Suspected

Individual schools don't have access to EverDriven's District Portal, resulting in a tangled game of "phone tag" to determine a student's whereabouts. Teachers and school staff are typically responsible for more than one student, making this inefficiency particularly painful.

Research Approach

We assumed teachers were struggling with student pickup logistics and needed better tracking tools. Research revealed the problem was significantly larger and fundamentally different than our original assumption.

How We Validated This

We conducted comprehensive field research across...

- ...**14 schools** in California...
- ...observing over **100 pickup and dropoff interactions**.

This included **stakeholder interviews with account managers and districts**, plus **guerrilla interviews with school staff** at pickup locations.

The goal was to validate whether teachers represented a viable market and whether our proposed solution approach would actually solve their problems.

The Basics

Roles

UX Research, UX/UI Design

Timeframe

2 Years, Beginning in May 2022

Tools

Figma, Google Forms

The Challenge

Solve fundamental scalability crisis preventing large district adoption while eliminating thousands of manual requests processed by internal routing team.



Timeline

June 2022

Started wireframing based on research insights, moving from initial teacher-focused concept to broader school staff solution as we understood the expanded market.

August 2022

Project got shelved due to business capacity constraints and competing priorities. The research and designs were completed but implementation was paused.

October 2023

Development capacity limitations required a new technical approach - creating a school staff partition within existing VIP infrastructure rather than building standalone.

July 2022

Built out comprehensive mockups for a standalone "Teacher App" that would address the core access and workflow problems identified through research.

May 2022

Flew to California to conduct field research across 14 schools, observing over 100 pickup and dropoff interactions to validate the market opportunity and understand real user needs.

September 2023

Leadership decided to revisit the validated opportunity, recognizing the market need we'd identified remained relevant over a year later. A different designer handled the 2023 design work.

April 2024

"VIP for School Staff" launched successfully, delivering the core user value identified in 2022 research through adapted technical implementation.

Foundational Research



Field Research

Our research team observed and documented over 100 pickups and drop-offs at 14 schools between Los Angeles and San Diego.



User Interviews

Conversations with 4 EverDriven account managers and 2 school districts in a formal setting regarding student tracking requests and their escalation. In addition, we conducted over 30 guerrilla interviews with school staff to understand their experience at the curb.



Survey

A short survey was handed out to school staff and districts to capture additional quantitative information.

School Observations



Varied Pick-Up Situations

With schools in a wide variety of urban, suburban, and rural settings, pick-up zones (or "kiss'n'go" lanes) face a range of challenges, such as traffic, security, unprotected streets, and a high ratio of students to staff.



Battle for Consistency

Students with special education requirements, or who attend a non-public school, may require a consistent ride experience for safety and comfort. In addition, transparency about a driver's location and ETA may help keep these riders calm while waiting to leave school.

Here's What the Problem Actually Looked Like

15 Minutes

average time for a teacher to learn a student's location.

6 People

average number involved to find a student's whereabouts.

104 Times

per year a school asks for the location of a student.

25%

of EverDriven students require consistency at the curb.

\$4.2 Million

The real cost of everyone playing phone tag.

Lost productivity from communication breakdowns between teachers, school administration, district administration, and EverDriven personnel.



What We Discovered

The Market Was Bigger Than We Thought

It wasn't just teachers. Paraprofessionals, front office staff, anyone managing pickup and dropoff had the same problem. The business hypothesis was validated, but the market opportunity was much larger than anyone expected.

Everyone Was Wasting Time

When someone asked "where's my student?" it took 20 minutes and 4-5 people to get an answer. School staff would call the office, office would call the district, district would call EverDriven, EverDriven would look it up and call back, and information would get passed back down the chain. By the time it reached the person who asked, it had often changed.

The Real Issue Wasn't What We Expected

We thought it was about waiting in bad weather. Actually, it was about access. Districts had all the information but wouldn't let schools see it. And even if they could, trying to use a laptop or the terrible mobile portal while standing curbside doesn't work.

The Solution We Designed

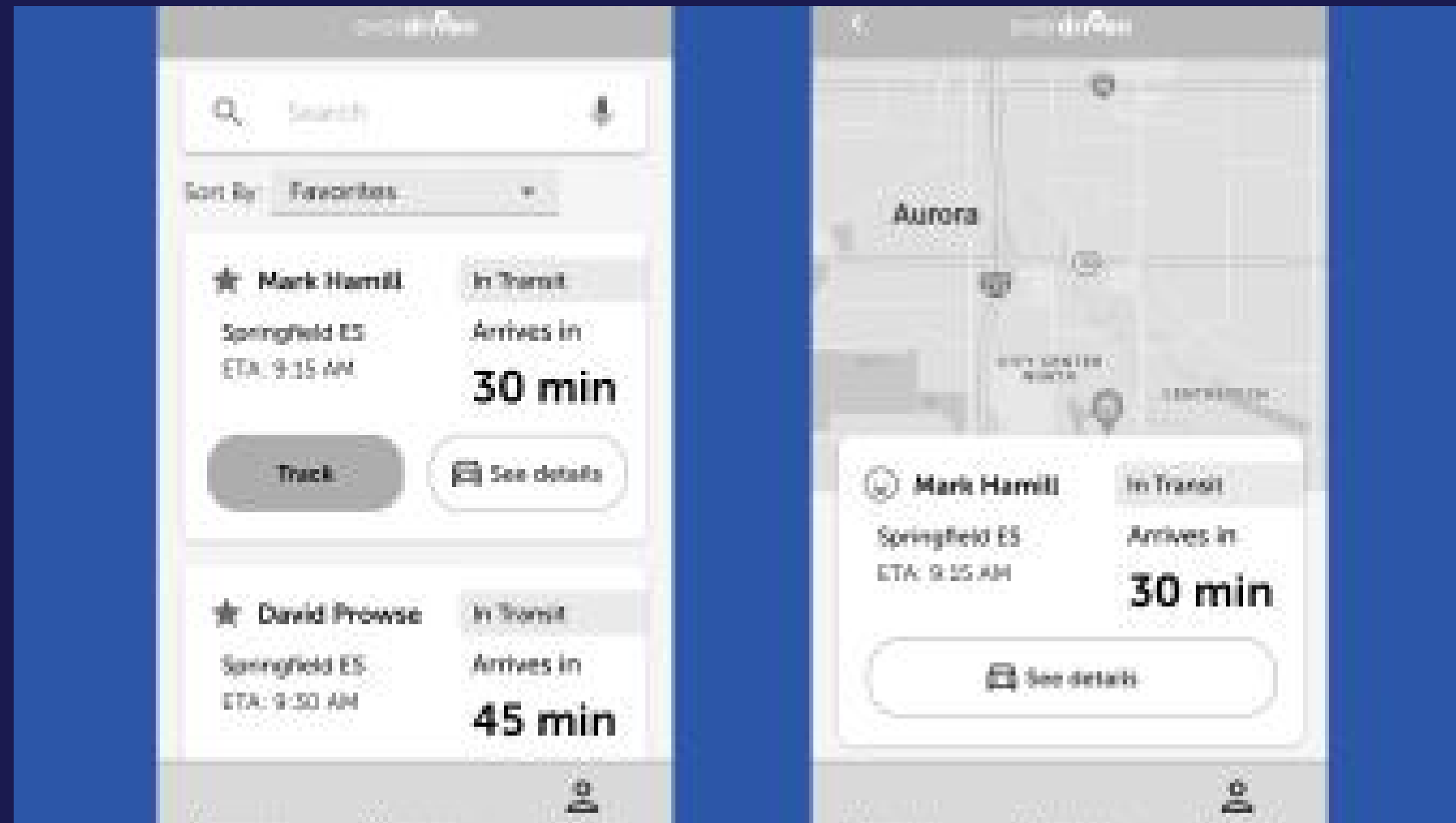
Based on what we learned, I designed a dedicated mobile app that would:

- Give school staff direct access to trip information (no more phone tag)
- Actually work when you're standing outside with a phone
- Respect district security concerns with proper permissions
- Serve everyone we discovered had this problem, not just teachers

The wireframes started by mirroring our VIP app layout, but quickly evolved as we realized we were designing for completely different users in completely different contexts.

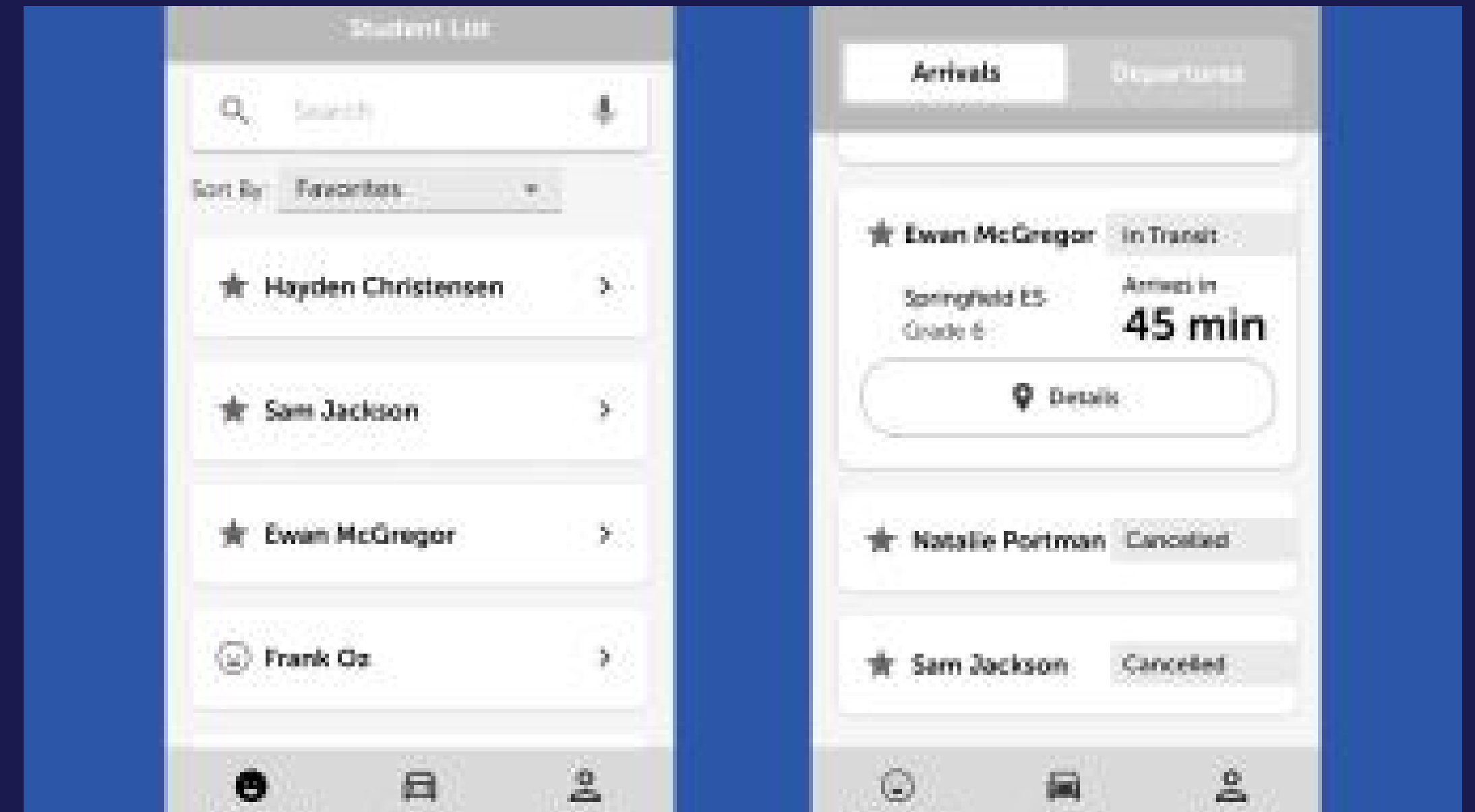
What happened: Project got shelved in August 2022. Business had other priorities.

Wireframe Iterations, 2022



“VIP Mirror” Approach

Started by copying the District Portal layout but making it work on mobile.



Then We Got Smarter

Realized we weren't just making a mobile portal - we were designing for completely different users in completely different contexts. The solution moved beyond simple portal adaptation to purpose-built school staff workflows.

V1 Mockups, 2022

Managing Multiple Students

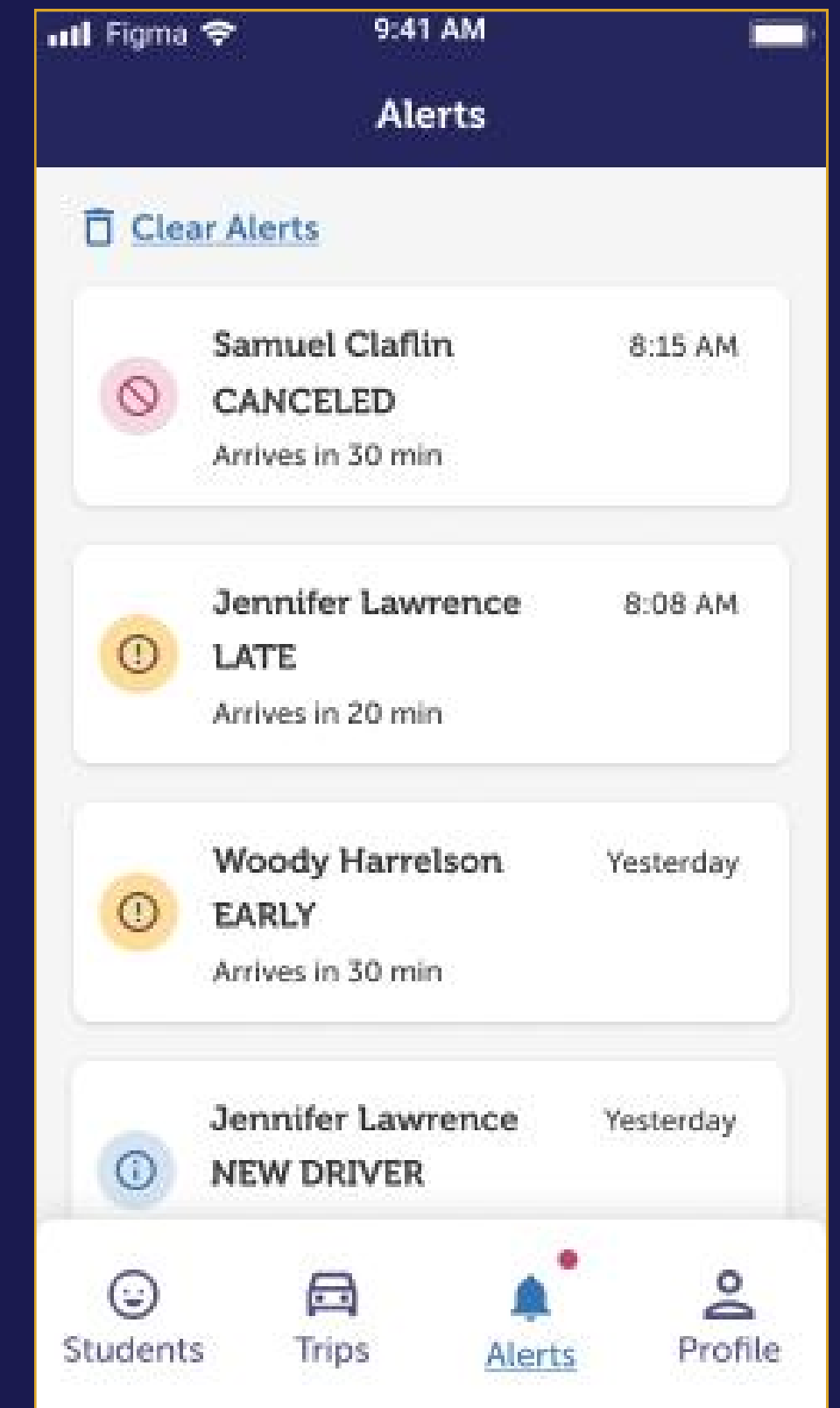
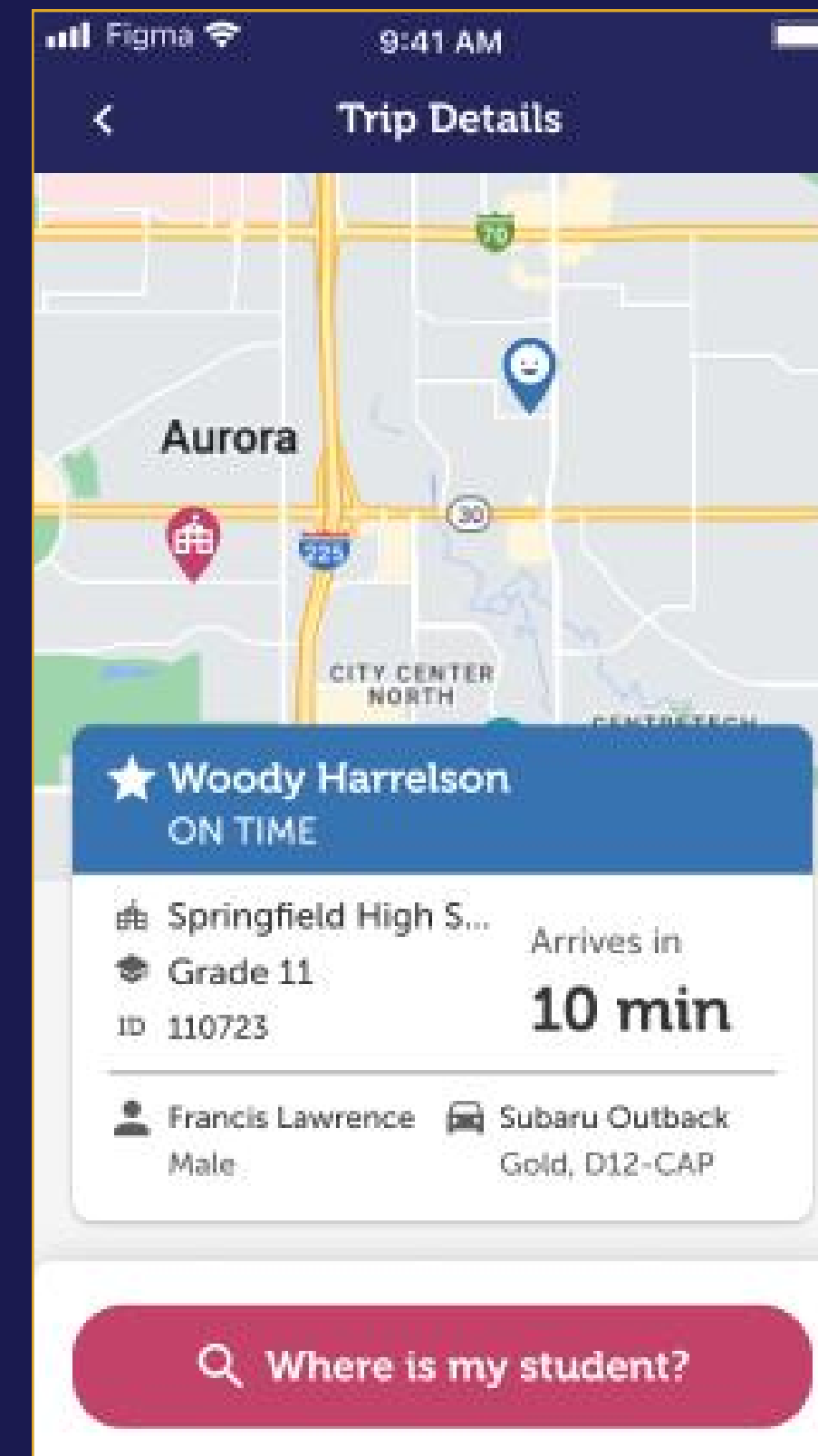
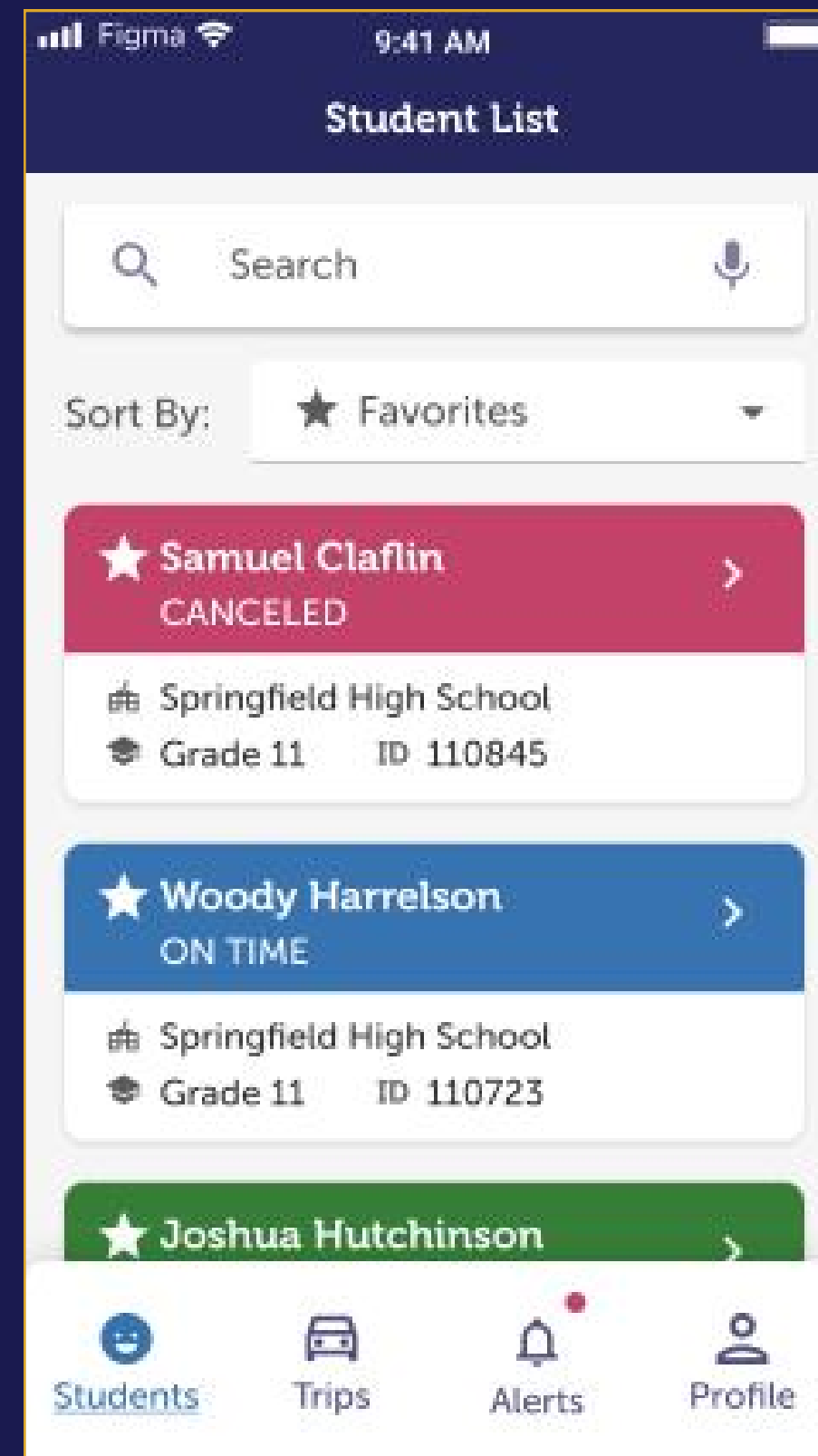
Designed for school staff juggling lots of kids, not parents tracking one child.

Cutting Out the Phone Tag

Direct connection to our system so no one has to call anyone to find out where a student is.

Actually Works Curbside

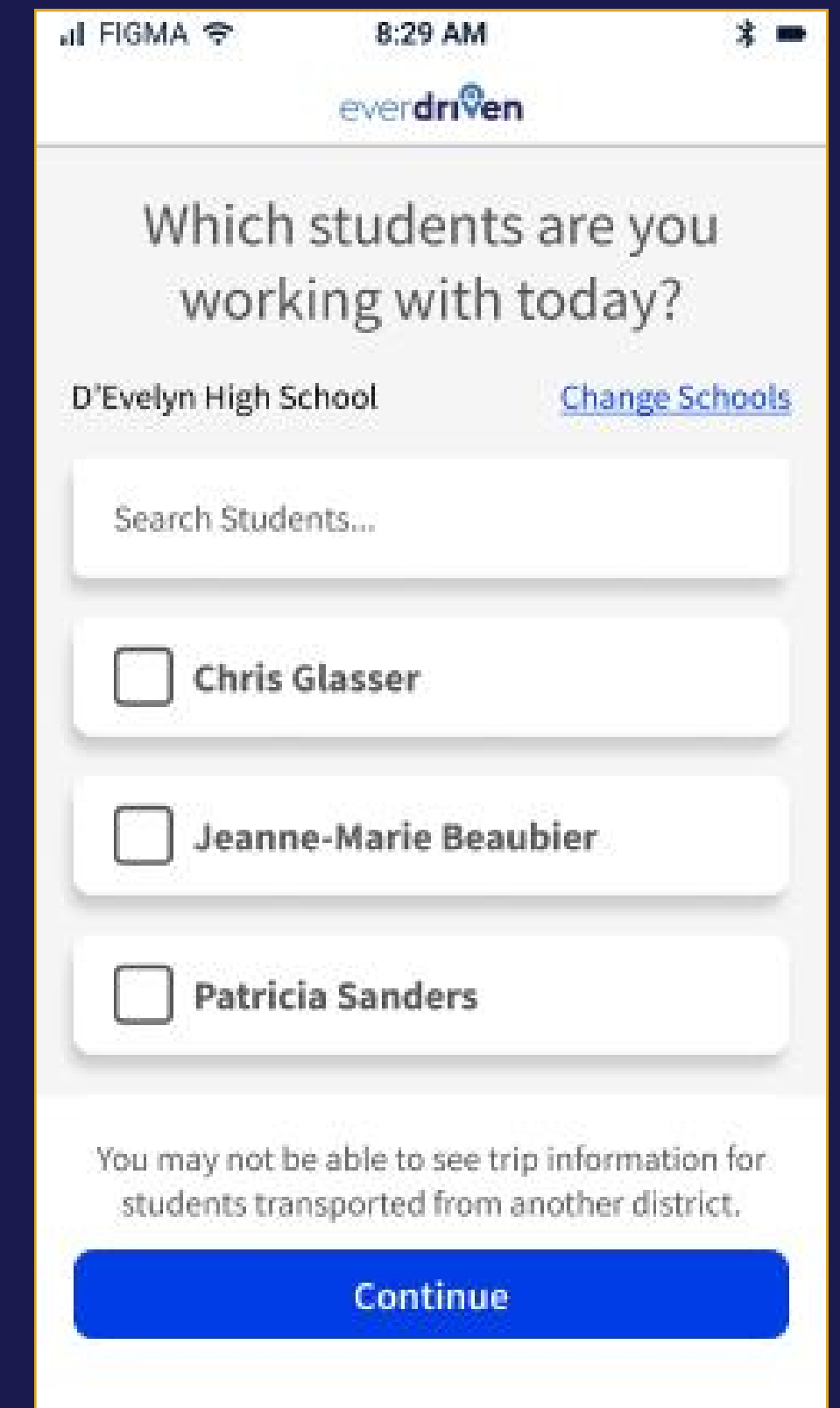
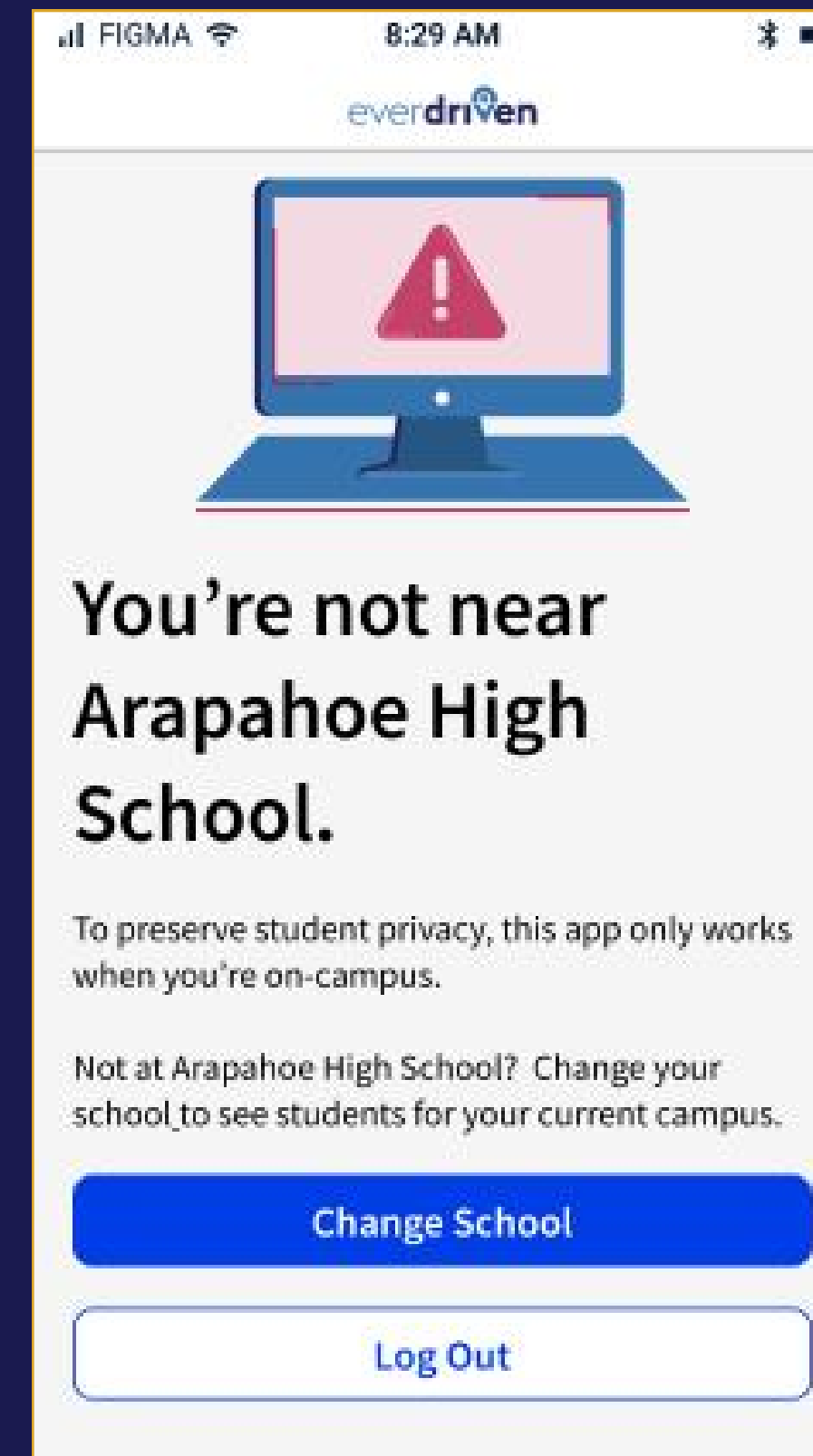
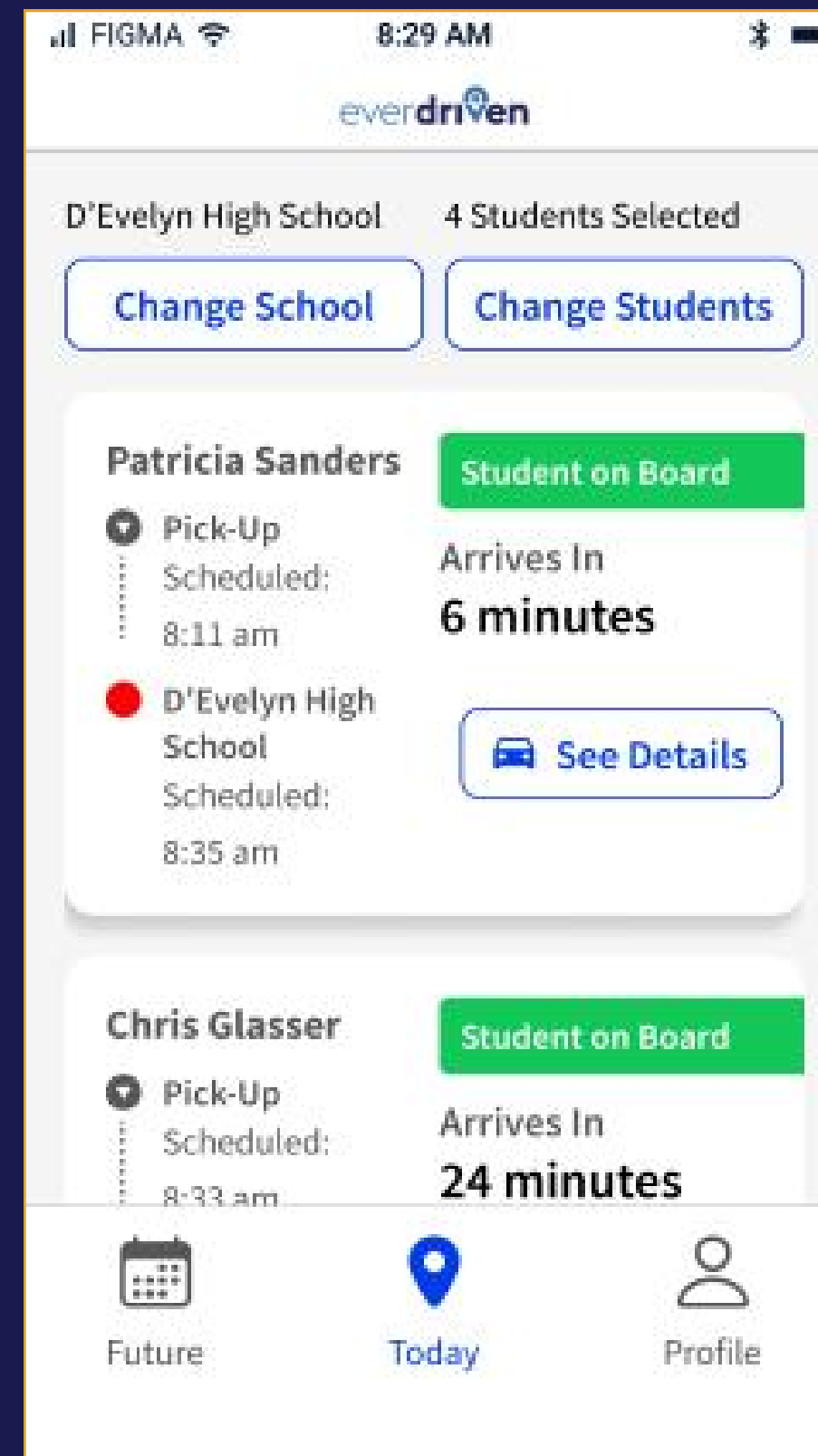
Mobile-first, because standing outside with a laptop isn't realistic.



What We Actually Built, 2023

Leadership revisited the opportunity we'd validated. But this time, the constraint was different: we had to use our existing VIP app instead of building something new.

A different designer handled the 2023 design work, adapting the solution to work within VIP's infrastructure while maintaining the research-driven user value we'd identified.



VIP for School Staff Solution

Used What We Already Had

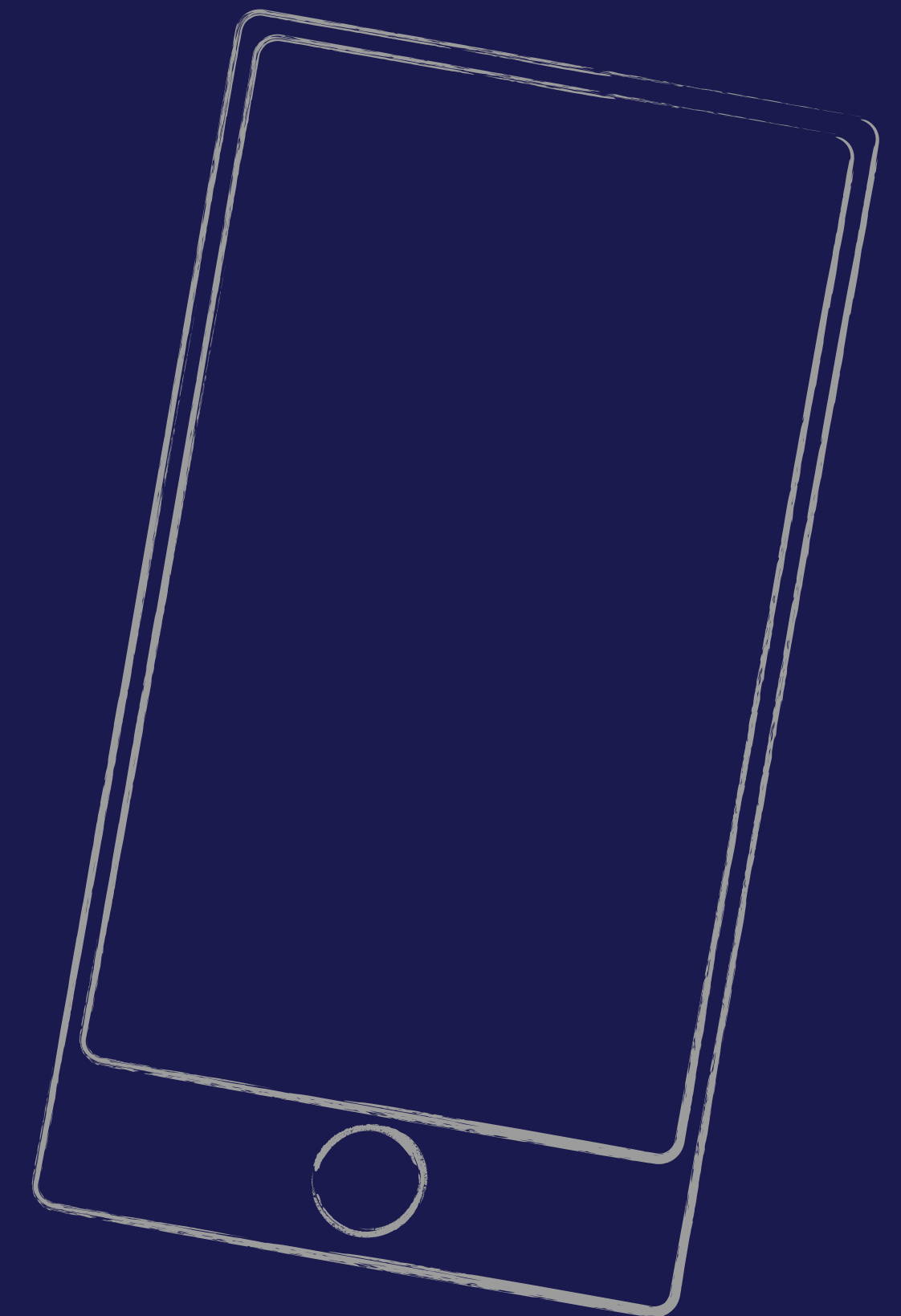
The VIP partition approach delivered what school staff needed without starting from scratch. By leveraging existing VIP infrastructure, development time was reduced while maintaining the research-driven user experience.

Kept Districts Happy

Geofencing meant staff could only access the app when they were actually at school. This addressed district concerns about school staff access while solving the core information problem.

Solved the Core Problem

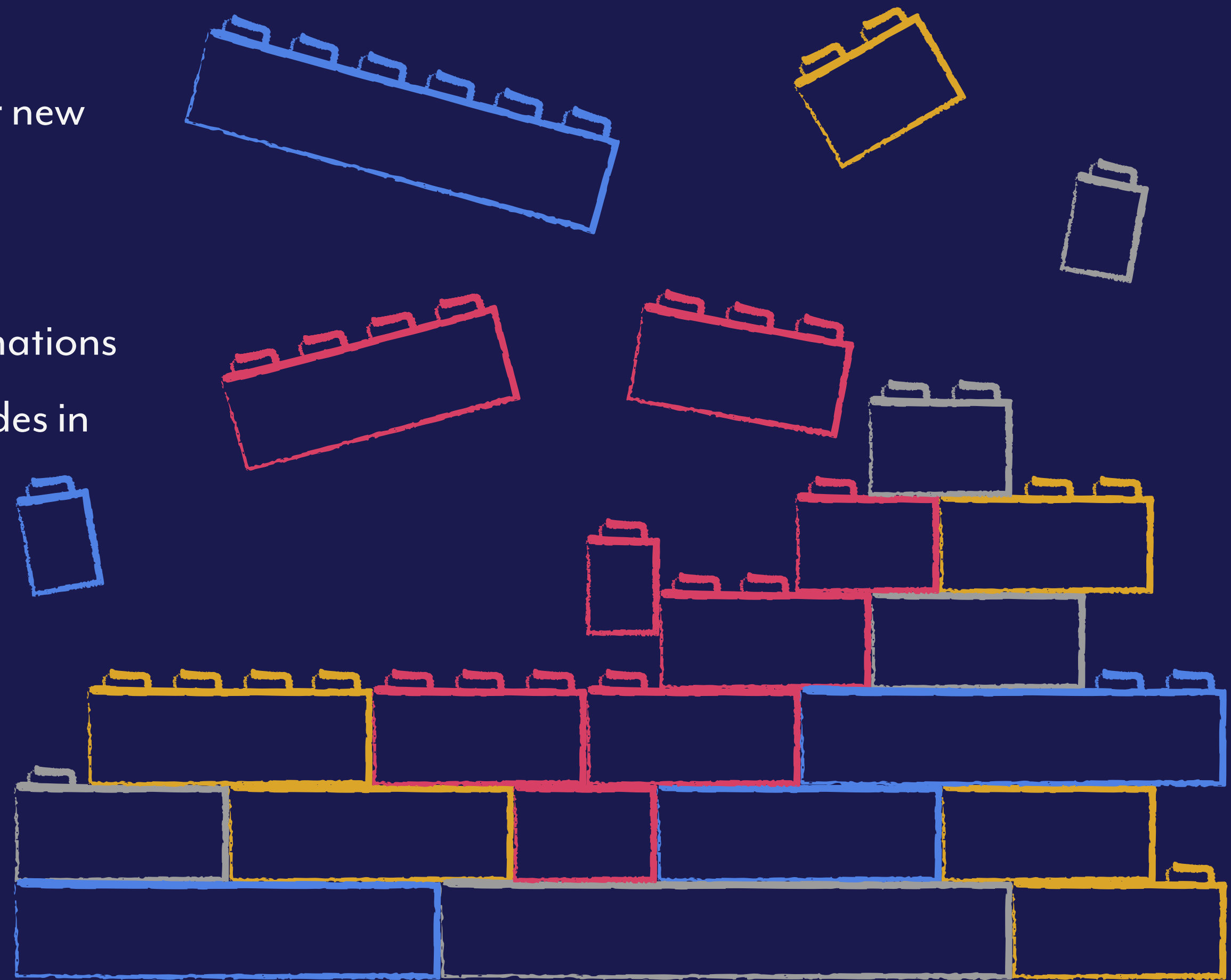
Mobile-first design that works curbside, serving all the school staff types identified in our original 2022 research. The solution eliminated the phone tag problem while respecting organizational constraints.

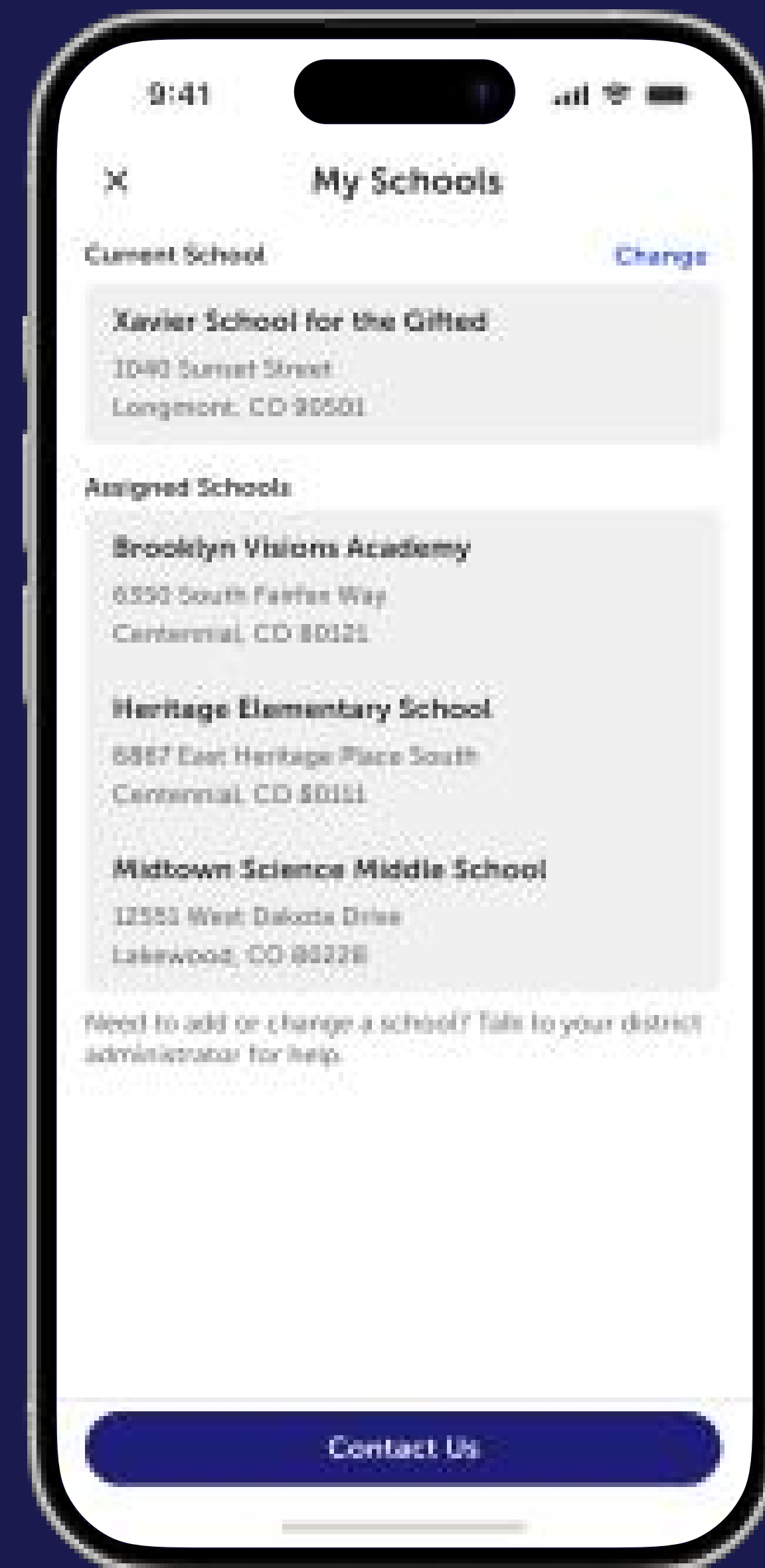
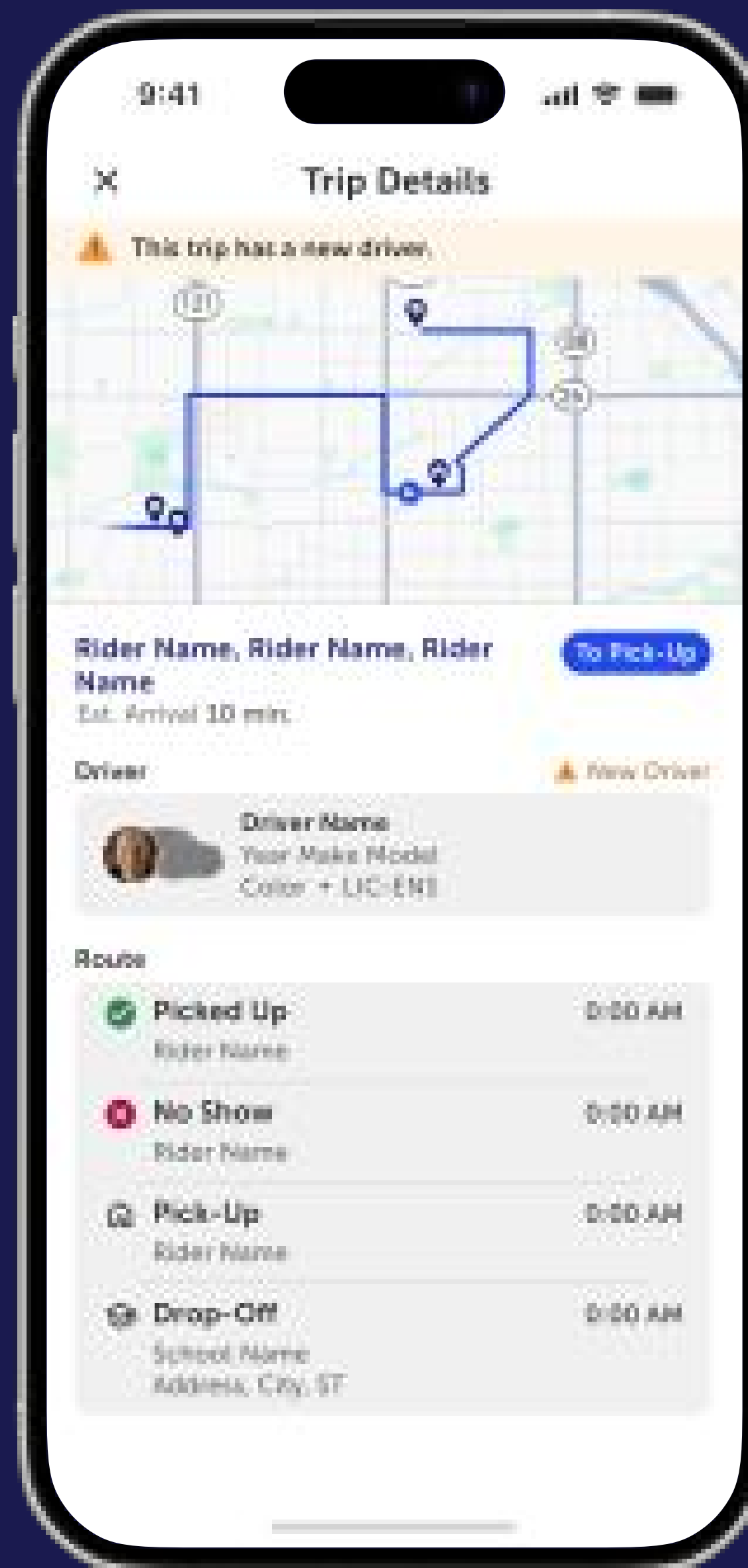
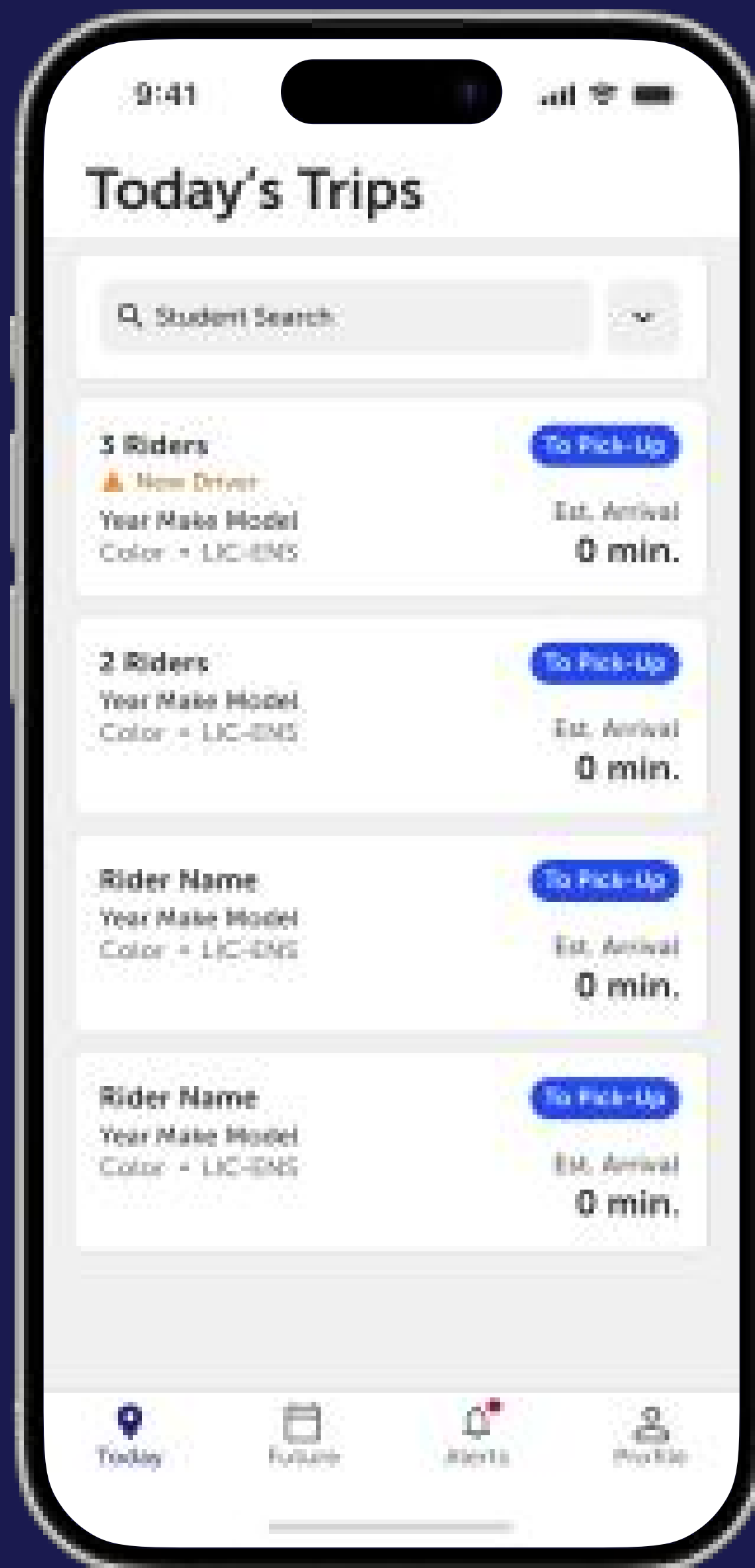


The Future of VIP for School Staff

What's Next?

- We're still improving the app, including rolling out our new design system
- Possible future features: driver ratings, parent communication & editing capabilities, pickup confirmations
- Planning more research on both school and parent sides in Q3 2026





These designs represent the future vision for VIP for School Staff, potentially updated with our new design system to provide an even more streamlined and consistent user experience.

What I Learned

Research Durability is Real

When the business came back to this project over a year later, our 2022 insights were still solid and actionable. Good research has staying power.

Field Research Beats Assumptions, Every Time

What we thought the problem was (bad weather, uncomfortable waiting) versus what it actually was (access restrictions, broken communication) were completely different.

Sometimes You're Not In the Room for the Big Decisions

The choice to restart the project, the decision to use VIP instead of standalone - UX wasn't involved in those calls. But our research provided the foundation that made those decisions possible.

This project showed me that thorough foundational research can guide successful product decisions even when everything else changes - timeline, team, technical approach. The \$4.2M opportunity we identified was real, and solving it was worth the long journey.

Market Validation Can Surprise You

We thought we were validating one user group but discovered the opportunity was much bigger.

You Can Solve the Same Problem Many Ways

When technical constraints changed, we found another path to deliver the user value without compromising on the core insights.



Want to Learn More?

Head on over to the [Contact](#) page. I'd love to chat!

