

A Service for Everyone

Ride Skoop reinvents public transportation

By Adam Austad

Walking down the sidewalk toward Wells Hall, the autumn sky is ablaze with pink and orange swirls over Spartan Stadium. Heading home from the library, a student stops at the end of the bridge panting and exhausted. As if on cue, a magical cycle rickshaw glides past pedestrians walking the path and stops right in front of the tired man. The gentleman on the vehicle smiles and asks, 'need a ride?'

Skoop: the name of the innovative, free transportation vehicles had reinvented travel in the Greater Lansing Area. Drivers pedaled a bicycle attached to a cart that could seat two people. Attached to the backs of the carts was a digital billboard advertising local brands. Skoop not only offered free rides, but also promoted local businesses — a huge step for bringing money back into the local economy.

"I oversee the whole property and the day-to-day operations at Campus Village," said Bradley Johnson, community manager for the apartment complex. "We saw a pedicab out on the street and we were like 'what is that?!' We signed up and we've been using them ever since. The drivers interact with the students, it's very eco-friendly — which is what we promote — and it's just good for everybody."

Josh Cooper, sophomore in advertising management and chief executive officer of Skoop, hatched the idea after one too many nights of leaving a fraternity at three in the morning and hopping into Ubers that charged a small fortune for a quick ride; that's when he went searching for a better solution. During his research he stumbled upon the pulled rickshaw, a concept originating in Asia in the 1800s, where a person would pull a two-wheeled cart sitting one to two people.

"They aren't pedicabs, they aren't rickshaws, and they aren't toot toots—they are Skoops," beamed Cooper. "We are the first to do any of this. Our greatest success has been staying true to doing things our own way. I chose MSU because I think East Lansing is one of the hardest places to do this in. We're no Grand Rapids and we are no Detroit. If we could prove the concept here, we could do this anywhere."

Eli Weil, junior in media and information, was one of the first drivers for Skoop. Weil grew up in the same area as Cooper and was one of his closest friends. During the spring of his freshman year, Cooper relayed an idea he had been working on to get people from 'point a to point b' for free, and he immediately wanted to join the Skoop family.

"It sounded genius at the time and now that I'm actually seeing it play out, it just makes so much sense," said Weil. "It's an amazing thing that Michigan State has needed and now we have it. As a driver, it brings so much excitement. Acts of kindness are what drive me everyday. It

makes my day to be able to give people free rides. Helping people get home safe from the bar or get to class on time — driving Skoop encompasses all of those things.”

Although East Lansing wasn't especially known for any single entrepreneurial gift to humanity, there was no shortage of dreamers. People who stood on flag poles asking for change. Creators unimpressed by current ways of doing things. For Skoop, it was about the community. Whether in seeing a dapper peddler gliding past or reading the trailing billboard providing a friendly reminder to eat locally, it was clear that this was a service for everyone.

WC: 582

PN: Josh Cooper, Bradley Johnson, Eli Weil, Skoop, Campus Village

Great work with this! You got some awesome quotes that really painted the Skoop picture. I think there's a little touching up to do in terms of intro and conclusion, but the body of the story is awesome. -Syd

This is awesome, great details, need a bit more visual of the scoops themselves though. -Logan