



Jordan Ramirez, holding up his smartphone displaying the RideScout app.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION  
BY NICK SIMONITE | ABJ

# EASY RIDER

*The University of Texas Intellectual Entrepreneurship program helped Jordan Ramirez turn his vision of a more-efficient transportation system into a real-world solution*

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**A**n idea that could potentially transform the way people use public transportation came to Jordan Ramirez during his sophomore year at the University of Texas while he was living in an off-campus house with nine roommates.

"We had a bus stop that delivered us right to campus, but about three of us had expensive parking passes on campus and the ones who didn't just had carpooling passes, (so) we basically just rode," Ramirez recalled.

Spending money on expensive parking passes and driving multiple cars to school when an inexpensive, and reliable, city bus was available didn't sit well with Ramirez, who started to brainstorm about what he saw as inefficiencies in the system.

"We have all this technology and it was just lagging behind," he said, "and so, naive and idealistic, I just tried to do something about it."

Ramirez developed an application platform that tapped into the bus GPS signal to provide tracking information that could be sent to a smartphone. Around the same time, RideScout, which was founded in Austin by Joseph Kopper — a 20-year Army veteran and former professor of leadership and strategy at UT — was developing its own mobile app that sorts through public

and private modes of ground transportation.

Now based in Washington, D.C., RideScout is a free mobile app launched in November that provides real-time, on-demand information on available ride options to get to a particular destination — be it walking, cycling or driving by car or public transportation.

RideScout recently paid Ramirez an undisclosed sum for what he described as his "IP, relationships... (and) me as the architect of the vision." And he's getting ready to join the company full time, but will split his time, as Kopper already does, between Austin and D.C.

Ramirez, a 22-year-old Rockwall, Texas, native, graduated from UT in May 2013 with a bachelor's in corporate communications and a minor in business — and a 3.5 GPA. He said the RideScout deal wouldn't have happened if he hadn't participated in UT's Intellectual Entrepreneurship program during his senior year.

"The motto for UT is, 'What starts here changes the world,'" Jordan said. "And I think the IE program is truly the platform to carry that type of ideal out for students."

The program flips education on its head, according to UT professor Richard Chervitz, founder and director of the IE consortium.

"IE is about changing education. Instead

of starting with disciplines, it's about starting with students, starting with problems, with issues, and using that as the way into academic knowledge and research."

Mentoring and networking opportunities are some of the features of the IE program — part of UT's Division of Diversity and Community Engagement — that Jordan credits with enabling him to actually turn his idea into reality just months after graduating.

During his semester in the IE program, Ramirez created presentations to pitch to transit agencies, showing them how they could make their cities more efficient by getting people out of their cars.

After graduating, Ramirez was working for the Jamislaus Group, an Austin advertising agency he co-founded with several of his UT peers. The company helps startups find their footing, he said.

## Caught a break

It was while on the job at Jamislaus that Ramirez got a timely break. A client of the firm connected him with Movability Austin, a transportation management association involved with Austin City Council.

It turned out that someone at Movability Austin knew RideScout's Kopper and asked if Jordan would like to be connected with him. In August, the two met for lunch.

"And I pull out my computer and what I had done was I kept all of the original presentations that I had to pitch to the transit agencies," Jordan recalls of the meeting. "And there was one thing that was the crux of that entire monetization model and that entire solution and that was a strong app."

Jordan then "just took the prototype for what I was going to have to create eventually and I put in RideScout and the solution just fit. It was like the missing piece to the machine running efficiently," Ramirez said.

While Ramirez wasn't comfortable disclosing financial terms of his deal with RideScout, he points out that he's not Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook fame. Still, when pressed he conceded that he's perhaps a bit more successful than most 22-year-olds.

Money, however, never has been extremely important to Ramirez. When he was in high school in Rockwall, just outside Dallas, he spent significant time helping the homeless in some of the roughest parts of the city. Thoughtful and eloquent, Ramirez seems to care more about making a difference.

"My story isn't that I sold all this IP and sold my company, essentially," Ramirez said. "The moral of my story is I... showed initiative for something that I didn't dismiss... and it became something that truly affected the world."