“I know I should drive less, but I just don’t think about that as I’m about to get in my car.”

Car culture must change
Between 70% and 80% of transportation in the United States consists of single-occupant vehicles [1]. Excessive car use damages the environment, increases congestion, and contributes to health problems. American car culture continues to worsen, and while public transit provides a viable option for mobility, it is not always an obvious alternative. We seek to decrease single-occupant trips among people who could choose to use alternative transportation.

Existing services cater to existing users
Potential transit users told us that they need information about transit options and relative costs in order to break their car habits. Existing services that provide this information do so only when users seek out alternative transit options. These services improve the transit experience but do not attract new users.

Individual coaching can change behavior
Individually coaching potential users is one of the most effective ways to increase public transit use [2]. While effective, this can be too costly for transit providers. altVerto automates many aspects of this coaching program, greatly increasing its reach. Choices, costs, and feedback are provided according to best practices in persuasive technology [3].

Sustained use
altVerto provides feedback on the historical costs of users’ travel choices. This motivates users to choose altVerto as their preferred route planner, and to consider changing how they make regular trips, such daily commutes.

Community
Community features in the results entice users to take ownership of their transit experience. As users move beyond annotating and discussing transit routes and options, altVerto becomes a hub for collective action on transit-related topics.

Selected references