



Project 2040 – Dispatch 7: Autonomous Vehicles and the Future of Schools

Greetings from 2040, past-lings.

Some days, it feels like we're living in a mash-up of *The Jetsons* and *Harry Potter*. School drop-offs and pick-ups are unrecognisable from what you experience in the 2020s.

Look up, and you'll see the swarm—drones delivering everything from textbooks to lunches, medical supplies to forgotten sports gear. They're so integrated into daily life that teachers, channelling their inner Radar O'Reilly from *M.A.S.H.*, can be heard calling out: "Incoming!"

Drones aren't just convenient; they're critical. Every school event now has first-aid drones on standby. Larger models are on hand for emergency extractions from camps and excursions. School security? Overseen by autonomous aerial patrols.

But it wasn't just the skies that changed—our entire approach to student transport evolved. As autonomous vehicles took over, reliance on traditional school buses declined, creating an opportunity few anticipated: flexibility.

At first, we stuck with the early 2020s model—bigger schools, further apart, consolidated for efficiency. But as movement became frictionless, we rethought everything. Why not create smaller, more localised learning hubs, tailored to different student needs? With resources and people able to move easily between sites, we no longer needed to rely on a one-size-fits-all school structure.

Autonomy in transport also led to autonomy in time. Schools no longer operated on rigid, outdated schedules. Some hubs started later, running classes into the evening, better aligning with adolescent sleep cycles and family needs. Learning became fluid, shaped around the realities of life rather than forcing students into a 9-to-3 industrial model.

This shift didn't just happen—it required rethinking education from the ground up. The question is, how long will it take today's system to embrace the potential of mobility?

As always, love to hear your thoughts.

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