

Boosted's first electric scooter is a \$1,599 vehicle built to conquer city streets

California company Boosted is known for its category-leading electric skateboards, but it's now ready to back up years of talking about branching out into other form factors. Today, the company announced the Boosted Rev, a \$1,599 dual-motor electric scooter that matches Boosted's well-tested (and well-loved) electric drivetrain technology with a rugged frame meant to handle rides through basically every kind of rough terrain that a city can throw at a commuter.

Unlike the many other electric scooters currently flooding the streets and sidewalks (and, let's face it, rivers) of cities around the world, Boosted only wants to sell the Rev directly to consumers – for now, at least. It's available for preorder today, and it will ship this summer.

CEO Jeff Russakow, who joined the company in 2017, says in an interview with *The Verge* that Boosted has received a lot of interest from scooter-share companies and other businesses that operate (or want to operate) fleets. But he says Boosted will focus on selling the Rev directly to start (unlike Inboard, one of its competitors, which recently decided to favor fleet sales over selling to consumers.)

The Rev won't show up in scooter-share services – at least not yet

"We're making what [scooter-share companies and fleet operators] need: a durable good that would improve their economics," Russakow says. "Right now, we're just very focused on serving the consumer market because we know their demand will massively outstrip our supply."

Russakow's confidence comes from the fact that Boosted's been leading the nascent electric skateboard category pretty much since it sprung to life back in 2014. The Rev uses the same technology that powers the Boosted's most recent top-of-the-line Stealth electric skateboard.

As such, the new scooter offers roughly the same specs, albeit in a much different package. The Rev has a top speed of 24 miles per hour, a range of about 22 miles, and it can tackle hills as steep as 25 degrees. It will pair with Boosted's existing app, which logs mileage and shows the battery level, and it has a digital display on the handlebars that shows speed and lets riders switch between three different power modes.

A top speed of 24 miles per hour and 22 miles of range

Where the Rev really gets interesting is in how it differs from those many shared scooters already out in the world. As ridership grows, major players like Bird, Lime, Uber, and Lyft, have tried to move beyond sourcing from the same Chinese suppliers whose scooters were not meant to be subjected to such heavy usage. But even some of those companies' first attempts at designing their own scooters don't seem to match up to just how rugged and, as Russakow puts it, "vehicle-grade" the Rev appears to be.

The Rev just *looks* like it can handle some serious stuff. It's big and commanding, and it kind of resembles a motorcycle. There's almost no plastic to be found; instead, Boosted opted to use forged metal for the biggest structural components. There's a wide, low deck covered in rubbery material, which sits on top of the batteries for a comfortable center of gravity. The 9.5-inch diameter wheels use very wide air-filled tires that make for a smooth, stable ride.

There's a motor in each of those wheels, too, which gives the Rev more commanding acceleration – and, maybe more importantly, braking – than the competition. The braking component of the equation is important on a vehicle where the rider is so exposed, and it's something that has set Boosted's skateboards apart. By allowing the boards' electric motors to spin backward to brake (a process known as regenerative braking), Boosted gave riders the ability to feed energy back into the battery, improving range. But it also put a ton of work into making that braking feel smooth, natural, and safe.

Just like on Boosted's boards, regenerative braking is a highlight

This same tech shows up in the Rev, which has a thumb wheel on the handlebars instead of the lever-style throttle found on most electric scooters. When riding the Rev, you roll the thumb wheel to the left to accelerate or right to use the regenerative braking. During a quick ride around the streets surrounding *The Verge's* office in lower Manhattan, the thumb wheel proved to be a smooth and effective controlling mechanism, just like it is on the remote Boosted uses for its skateboards.

Knowing that many riders might not be familiar with this method of braking, Russakow points out that there are actually three ways to brake on the Rev. Beyond the thumb wheel, there's a regular mechanical brake on the left handlebar (which triggers a disc brake on the rear wheel). There's also a "stomp" brake in the fender over the rear wheel.

The Rev appears to be a very capable vehicle. That doesn't mean it won't be cumbersome. It will take about three hours to fully charge the battery. The scooter also weighs 46 pounds. The handlebar stalk folds down and clicks into the rear wheel fender so it's easier to pick up or stash in a tight spot, but

it's definitely not going to be easy to haul around.

Boosted's betting that, even with the high price tag, it will find customers who think those are worthy trade-offs for the versatility they're getting in return.

The scooter folds for easier carrying, but it weighs 46 pounds
"If you look at any other scooters on the market, same as we saw with [skateboards], those companies are making toy or leisure grade products. And I don't mean that to be dismissive or disrespectful," Russakow says. "They're just not made for vehicle and mechanical safety, electrical and fire safety, environmental safety."

Boosted co-founder and CTO John Ulmen puts it in even simpler terms: "It's going to do everything you want it to do, when you want it to do it."

Plus, Ulmen says, since the Rev shares so much of its drivetrain tech with the company's skateboards, Boosted is confident that the scooter will be able to tackle almost anything a city street throws at it. "A skateboard is about the most abused product you can imagine, and our customers are benefiting from all of those years of, you know, real-world abuse testing," says Ulmen. "This isn't the first time we've done this. In fact, the scooter, in a lot of ways, is a much tamer product from a reliability standpoint."

The upfront cost is also a bet of sorts. Russakow believes there are plenty of people out in the world who will want to own, rather than rent or "share," a scooter made specifically for commuting because, over time and with heavy usage, it could offer better convenience and net economics.

"The ride-share model is great for ad hoc travel," he says. "But the vast majority of travel is routine, and so the vast majority of people tend toward vehicle ownership because the two things you care about in your commute are: is it instantly and reliably available? I'm not taking any risk I won't be

where I have to go find one. And is it pennies per mile to operate?”

Where Boosted helped lead in the electric skateboard category, it’s actually a little behind the electric scooter trend. But Russakow sees the proliferation of scooter sharing as a form of free advertisement. Companies like Bird and Lime are “putting demos on every street corner on the planet, and we love that,” he says.

“What we’re seeing is people say, ‘Hey, I like this.’ And then a lot of them are saying, ‘I want to buy one, and I want a good one,” Russakow says.

An ownership business model will also help Boosted dodge some of the regulatory and policy problems the Birds and Limes of the world have to deal with, Russakow says.

That said, the company is still subject to other headaches, like the trade war with China. While Boosted designs its products from the ground up to use basically no off-the-shelf components, the company has had them made in China ever since the second-generation skateboard. That means the economics of Boosted’s products are subject to the whims of President Donald Trump.

Boosted’s products get made in China, which means they’re caught up in the trade war

But customers won’t have to worry about Boosted’s premium prices getting pushed up any higher, according to Russakow, who says Boosted will eat the cost of any tariffs. “We really want people to have this almost *Sixth Sense* moment where they go, ‘Shit, I’ve just been getting in this car for two hours a day. Why am I doing that?’ And so this is probably not the point to try and optimize profit. This is the time to actually optimize getting people exposed and getting them to just

rethink how they get [where they're going]," he says.

Boosted can do that because it's on relatively stable financial ground for a startup. It's still not profitable, though Russakow says the company could be if it wanted to. Instead, it received \$80 million in a Series B round of funding last December, and it has "really supportive investors" who are "absolutely committed to the vision of the company," says Russakow. That's helped the company grow into 34 countries, with major Asian and Middle Eastern companies being added this year, he adds.

Boosted has talked about branching out beyond skateboards dating back to the days when co-founder and former CEO Sanjay Dastoor was still with the company. He left his post as CEO when Russakow took over in 2017 and took a spot on Boosted's board of directors, but he also started his own scooter sharking company called Skip in the meantime with another Boosted co-founder, Matt Tran.

"I'm so happy for the entire team and community," Dastoor tells *The Verge* via email. "The engineering and product and customer teams worked super hard on the design with the same attention we always brought to the boards. We need more of that to make micromobility successful as quickly as possible."

Asked what it will be like to be competing in the same category as his fellow co-founder, even if it's with different business models, Ulmen offers a diplomatic answer. "I guess the way I look at it is, it's great to get more of these vehicles on the road just period, you know," he says. "We're all trying to do the same thing here. I think it's a worthwhile mission."

<https://www.theverge.com/2019/5/15/18624220/boosted-rev-electric-scooter-specs-price-interview>