The double-decker electric vehicle uses newly designed stops and increased interior space to help keep passengers safe

Spotted: Hong Kong’s Ponti Design Studio has created an autonomous, electric-powered tram, named the Island. Designed specifically to encourage the use of public transport while maintaining safe social distancing, the tram is a double-decker vehicle. Island-shaped seats run down the middle of each level, encouraging riders to face away from each other. The majority of the sides and ceiling are glass, ensuring maximum natural light inside.

Interactive signage at the accompanying stops (also designed by the Ponti Studio team) directs passengers on and off and through the contactless payment system. The removal of a driver’s section, combined with the removal of in-tram payment points, maximises interior space in order to support the continued need for people to remain as far apart from each other as possible while in public.

The introduction of this concept tram is significant, with 2020 marking 115 years of Hong Kong’s tramways. Additionally, campaigners for a greener future are seeking means to rapidly reverse the world’s returning reliance on individual cars for transport. The change is, of course, a response to the continued worldwide threat from the latest coronavirus.

Innovators in every industry are working at top speed to protect their businesses and products from the virus and, simultaneously, adapt to an entirely new work-life and public-private balance. Many urban centres are focusing on making public spaces safer. Springwise has spotted a car-free city district which encourages travel by foot, bicycle and ferry and robo-taxis available for booking via a ride-hailing app.
Takeaway:

In order to meet the climate change goals necessary for long-term human survival, significant and rapid investment in transport infrastructure and social policy is needed. The current global pandemic makes that challenge even greater. Cross-industry collaboration may be one of the swiftest methods of achieving long-lasting, meaningful changes to the ways communities travel. Imagine a central transport hub, run on renewable energy, powering trains, buses, cars, vans and personal mobility machines, with many of the vehicles sharing multi-use technologies. And to further strengthen the usefulness of the hub, excess power is sold back to the grid, strengthening the sustainability of its local, circular energy, travel and technology systems.