

GETTING STARTED

Introduction to Backlog Grooming



contents

SECTION

backlog grooming?

1

what is backlog grooming?	4
who should be involved in a grooming session?	5
benefits of backlog grooming	6
guidelines for effective backlog grooming	7
difference b/w backlog grooming and sprint planning	8

SECTION

backlog grooming using the story map

3

example: car infotainment system	17
issues linked to an epic	18
issues without epics	19
prioritising on the story map I	20
prioritising on the story map II	21
refining the backlog - summary & estimation	22
refining the backlog - sequencing	23
breaking down big stories	24

SECTION

backlog grooming example:

2

Apple TV

prioritising the backlog	11
refining	12
breaking epics down into user stories	13
estimating	14
repeat and refine	15

WORKSHOP

What is Backlog Grooming?

what is backlog grooming?

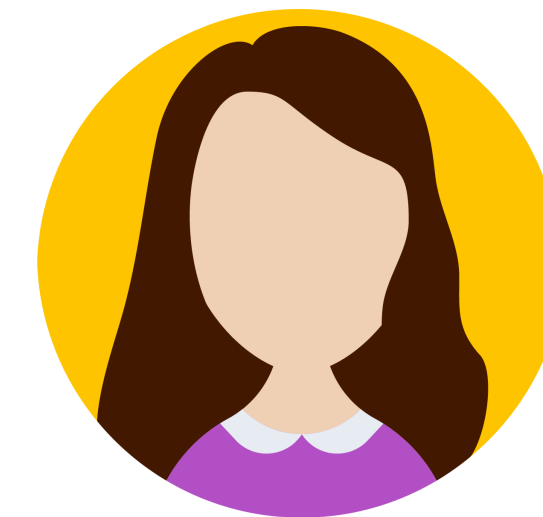
Backlog grooming is when the Product Manager and their team review items on the backlog, ensuring it only contains appropriate items ordered by priority, and that the items on the top of the backlog are ready for delivery.

Some of the activities that occur during the refinement of the backlog include:

- Removing user stories that no longer appear relevant
- Creating new user stories in response to newly discovered needs
- Re-assessing the relative priority of stories
- Assigning estimates to stories which have yet to receive one
- Correcting estimates in light of newly discovered information
- Splitting user stories which are high priority but too large to fit in an upcoming iteration
- Looking more extensively into the total backlog to enable long-range technical and project planning

who should be involved in a grooming session?

- ✓ Invitation to participate should be open to the whole team (however, smaller groups work better)
- ✓ Scrum Masters and Product Managers lead the session
- ✓ While it is desirable to have the whole development team, this is not always feasible. At a minimum, the lead developers should attend
- ✓ There should be at least a few stakeholders involved (keep numbers to a minimum to avoid distractions)



benefits of backlog grooming

- ✓ Increases efficiency of the team by greatly reducing uncertainty and unknowns
- ✓ Better refined stories are more accurately estimated, tested and implemented
- ✓ Delays related to external dependencies and larger efforts are discovered sooner
- ✓ Increases efficiency of the team due to increased shared knowledge and understanding of the product
- ✓ Allows the team to maintain a sustainable, higher pace = greater team velocity
- ✓ Reduces the time spent on Sprint Planning sessions
- ✓ Increases the value of Sprint Planning meetings

guidelines for effective backlog grooming sessions



Set a goal for the session: send out a list of stories you want to groom ahead of time and ask the team to review, coming to the meeting with any questions, tasks, hours etc. - the overarching goal should be for all attendees to leave with a clear understanding of what is left for project completion and the upcoming sprint goals



Keep the group small: involve the PM, their agile team and a few stakeholders. A smaller group = more engagement and the less likely you are to get sidetracked.



Meet frequently: a good backlog grooming session leaves everyone feeling familiar with the product backlog, gives them a clear understanding of the goals for the next sprint, and means they can hit the ground running in the Sprint Planning meeting. Schedule grooming sessions regularly, usually a few days before the Sprint Planning meeting

differences between backlog grooming and sprint planning sessions

	backlog grooming session	sprint planning meeting
purpose	To maintain a healthy updated product backlog to ensure time spent in sprint planning is optimised	To agree on a goal for the next sprint and the set of backlog items that will help the team to achieve it
components	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) re-writing backlog items to be more expressive and deleting obsolete ones2) Breaking up large stories	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) prioritising backlog items2) agreeing on the amount of backlog items in the sprint based on capacity
when?	A few days prior to the sprint planning meeting	At the beginning of every sprint

WORKSHOP

Backlog Grooming

Example: Apple TV



product backlog example: Apple TV

A product backlog for Apple TV at the beginning of a grooming session



As an iTunes user I want to redeem my gift card so that I can claim my credit



ATV-121



As a user I want to find movies easily so that I save time browsing long lists



ATV-111



As a user I want to be able to fast forward movies so that I skip scary parts of the film



ATV-483



As a user I want to be able to save my favourite movies to a list so that I can watch them later



ATV-345



As a user I want to use Paypal as my preferred payment method so that I feel safe about my transactions



ATV-345

prioritising the backlog

The Product Manager knows that their users are having significant trouble searching for films, resulting in higher churn. They decide to prioritise that backlog item for the upcoming sprint by moving it to the top of the list.

 **As a user I want to find movies easily so that I save time browsing long lists**

 ATV-121

 As an iTunes user I want to redeem my gift card so that I can claim my credit

 ATV-111

 As a user I want to be able to fast forward movies so that I skip scary parts of the film

 ATV-483

 As a user I want to be able to save my favourite movies to a list so that I can watch them later

 ATV-345

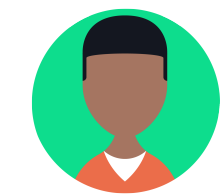
 As a user I want to use Paypal as my preferred payment method so that I feel safe about my transactions

 ATV-345

refining the backlog

The Product Manager and Scrum Master begin to breakdown the prioritised backlog item. After discussions with the team, they realise that this user story is going to be a large amount of work. They refine the user story into an epic, to better illustrate the amount of work involved to achieve this objective

 **As a user I want to find movies easily so that I save time browsing long lists**




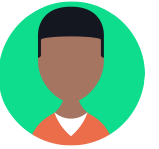





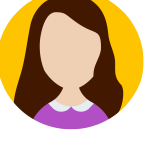

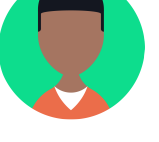
ATV-121



breaking epics down into user stories

Using the epic, the team start to define various user stories that sit under the umbrella of that 'Search' epic. The team prioritise the user stories by most immediate value to the customer. Value can be identified through conversations with users, analytics on usage patterns, or another insight appropriate for your product.



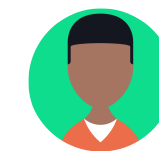
	As a user I want to free text search so that I save time browsing long lists	 ATV-485
	As a user I want to browse by genre so I can find movies I like quicker	 ATV-486
	As a user I want to browse by most popular so I can find inspiration for films to watch	 ATV-487
	As a user I want to browse by most popular by genre so I can find movies I like quicker	 ATV-488
	As a user I want to browse by recent addition by genre so I find movies I haven't watched before quicker	 ATV-489

estimating

Now that the user stories are ordered by priority, it is time for the team to allocate estimates to how long/how much effort each particular story will take. This requires team members detailing requirements and acceptance criteria to understand the scope of the work. Every team member is given the opportunity to put forward their estimate and justification. The Product Manager will take the majority SP estimate or average, in this example the majority of the team think the estimate should be 2.

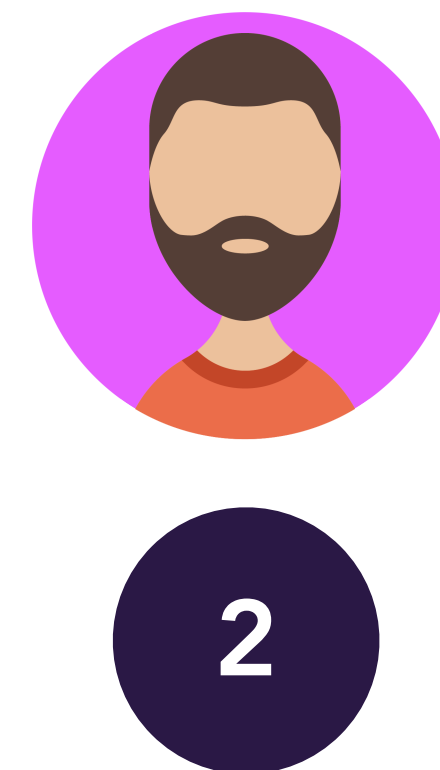
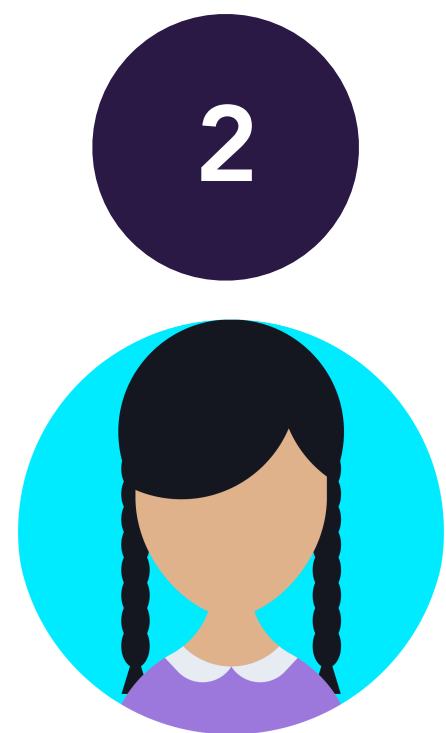


As a user I want to free text search so that I save time browsing long lists





















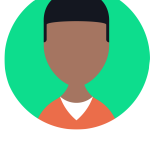

ATV-485

2



repeat and refine

Continue going through the backlog with your team splitting stories and breaking out tasks. Work with the team to prioritise backlog items, identify requirements, acceptance criteria and estimate work = a healthy backlog and an enlightened team

	As a user I want to free text search so that I save time browsing long lists		 ATV-485	
	As a user I want to browse by genre so I can find movies I like quicker		 ATV-486	
	As a user I want to browse by most popular so I can find inspiration for films to watch		 ATV-487	
	As a user I want to browse by most popular by genre so I can find movies I like quicker		 ATV-488	
	As a user I want to browse by recent addition by genre so I find movies		 ATV-489	

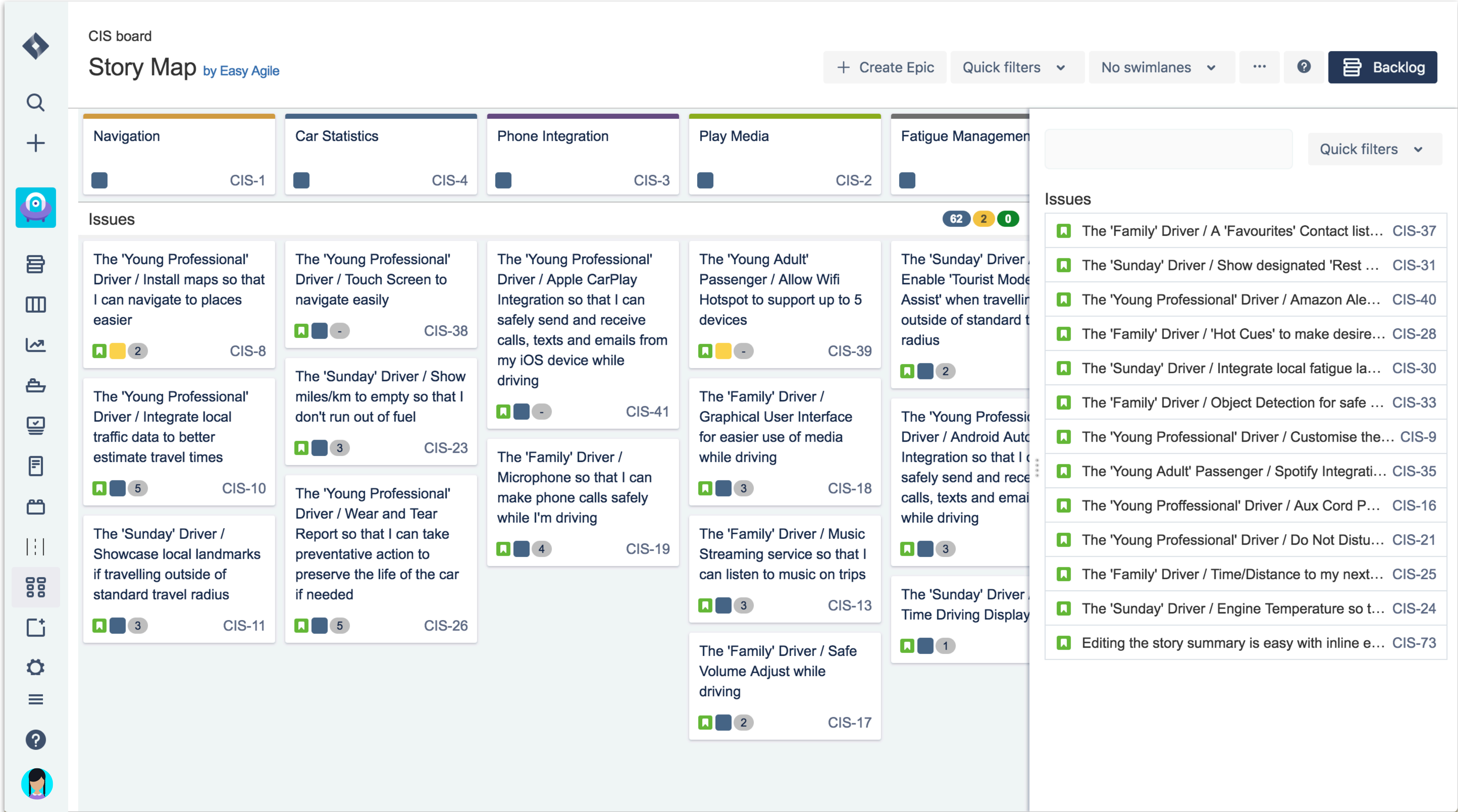
WORKSHOP

Backlog Grooming: Using the Story Map

Example: Car Infotainment System

This is an 'unfiltered' view of a story map for a Car Infotainment System. It has not been split out into Sprints or Versions.

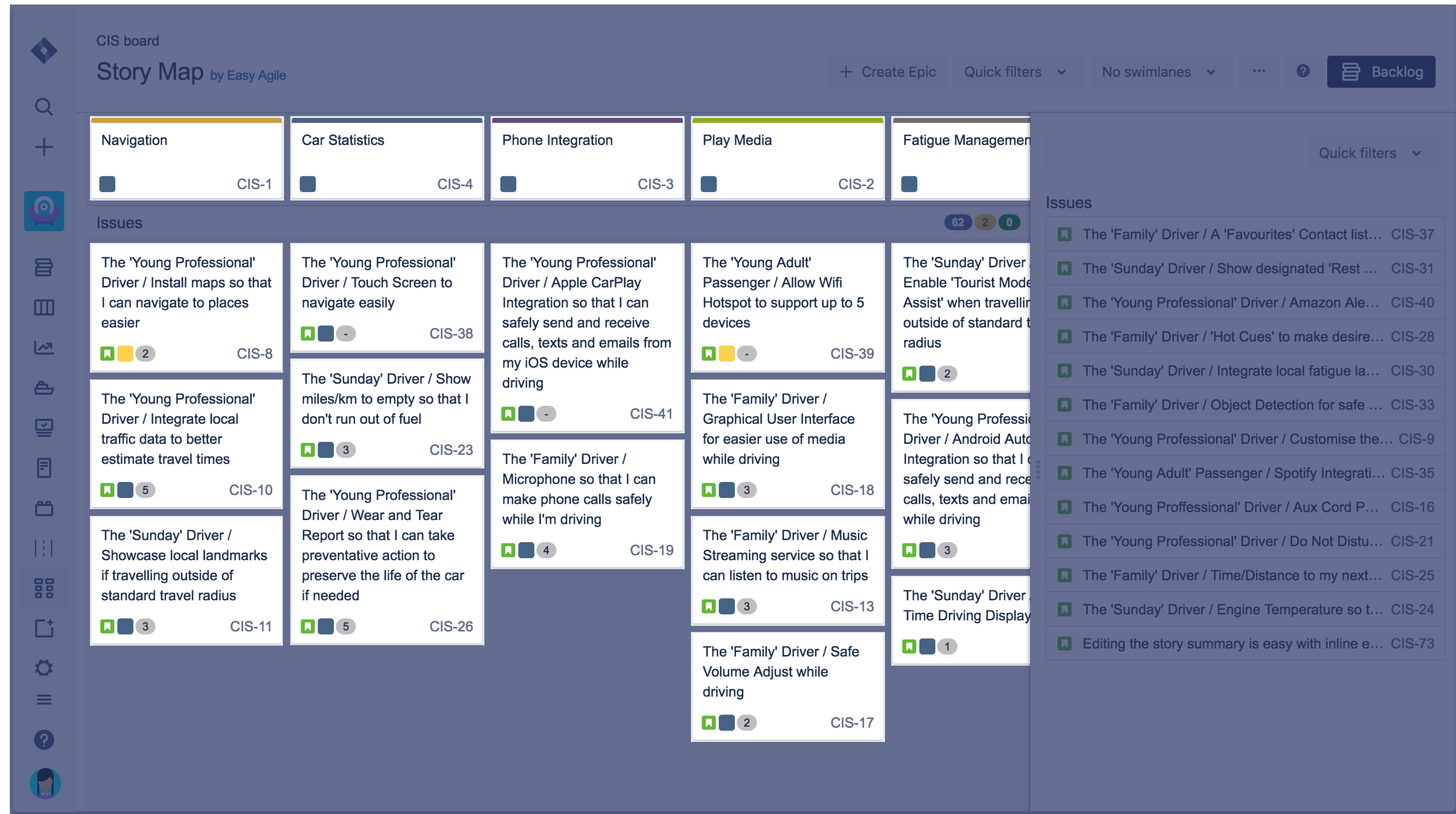
This view allows us to see all of the issues and Epics in a team's Agile Board.



Issues Linked to an Epic

Highlighted on the left of the Story Map, we see all of the issues underneath their associated Epics.

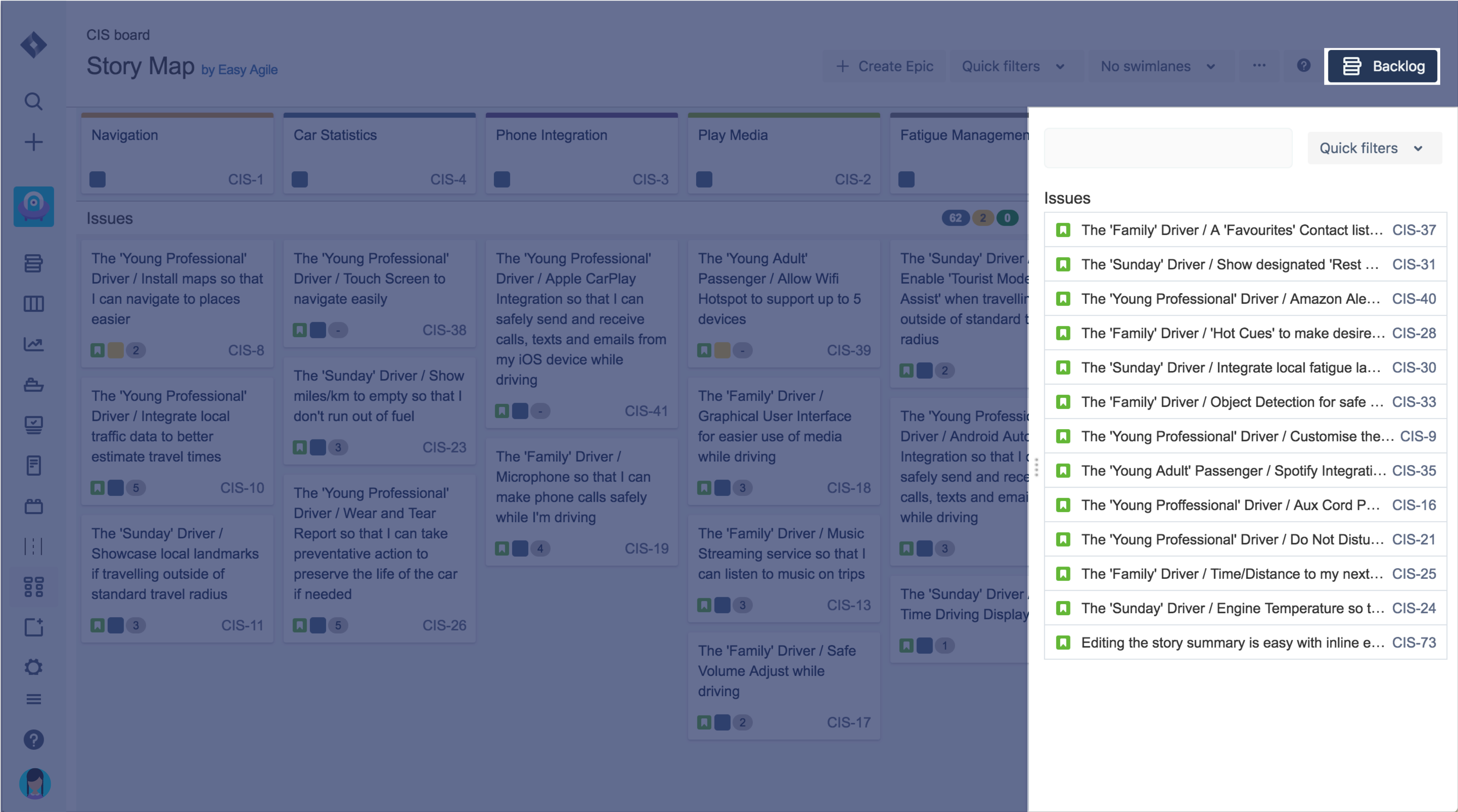
The Epics sit along the top of the Story Map, and the issues sit underneath.



Issues without Epics

On the right, the open 'Backlog' panel displays all of the issues that are not associated with an Epic in a Team's Agile Board.

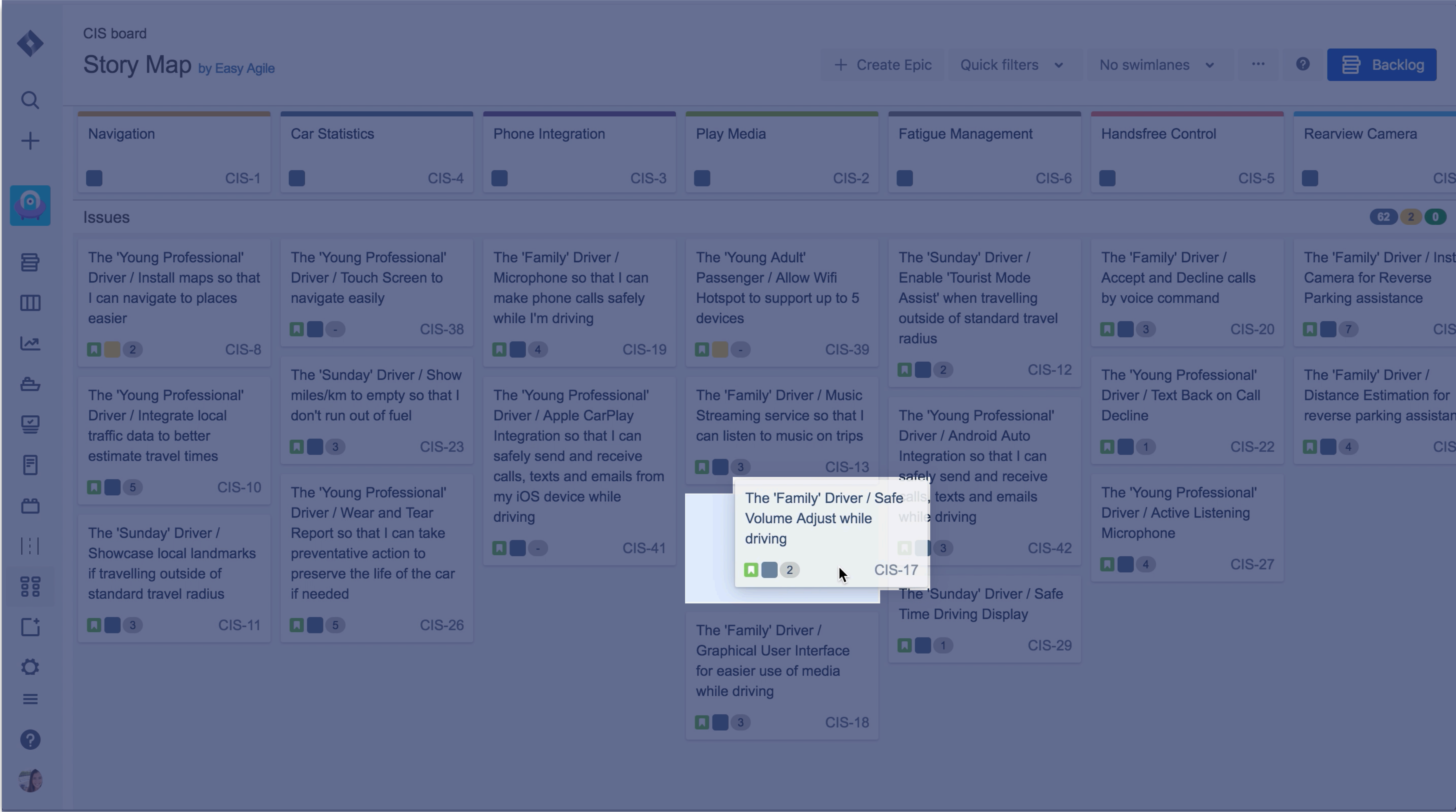
This view allows us to see all of the issues associated with a Team's Agile Board (whether they are associated with an Epic or not)



Prioritising the Backlog on the Story Map I

Stories are prioritised by value to the user, with the most valuable stories placed at the top of the story map

We can prioritise issues on the story map by simply dragging and dropping them into their designated positions.

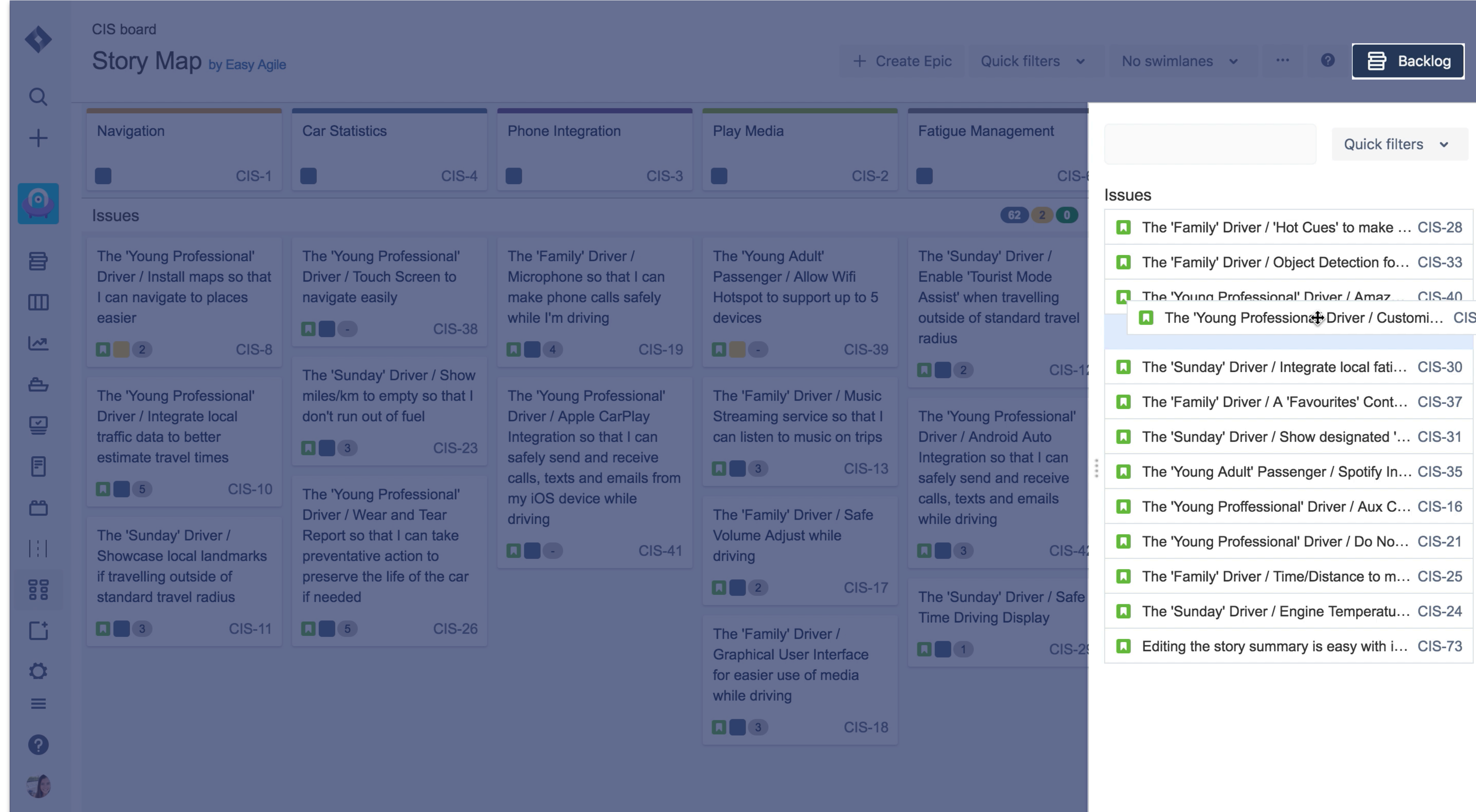


Prioritising the Backlog on the Story Map II

We can also prioritise issues that are not associated with Epics in the 'Backlog' Panel.

These issues should also be prioritised by value to the user, with the most valuable items sitting at the top of the 'backlog'.

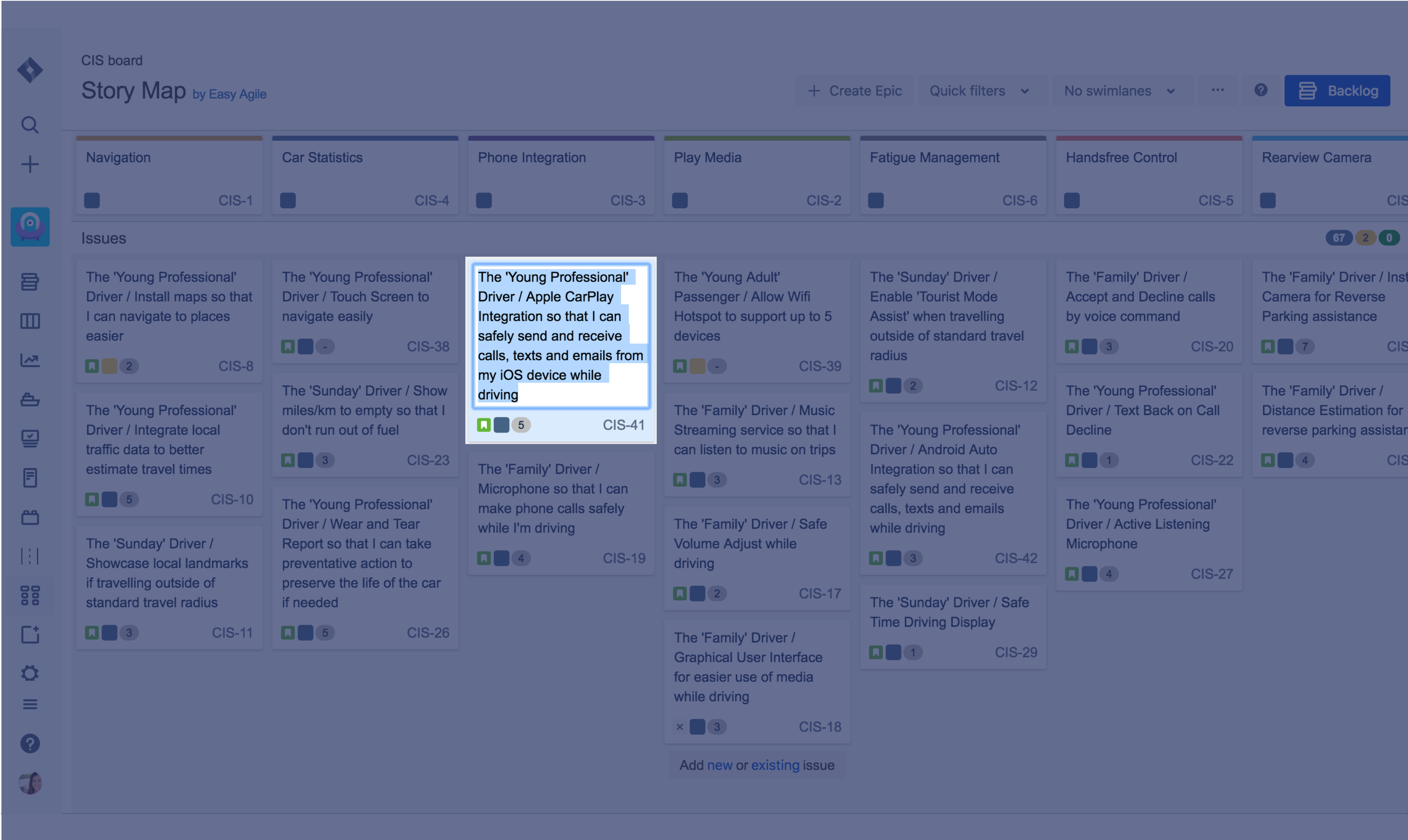
Simply drag and drop these issues within the 'Backlog' panel into their designated positions



Refining the Backlog - Summary & Estimation

The ability to inline edit the estimate and summary of an issues is simple inside the story map. Simply click on the summary or estimate and begin to type.

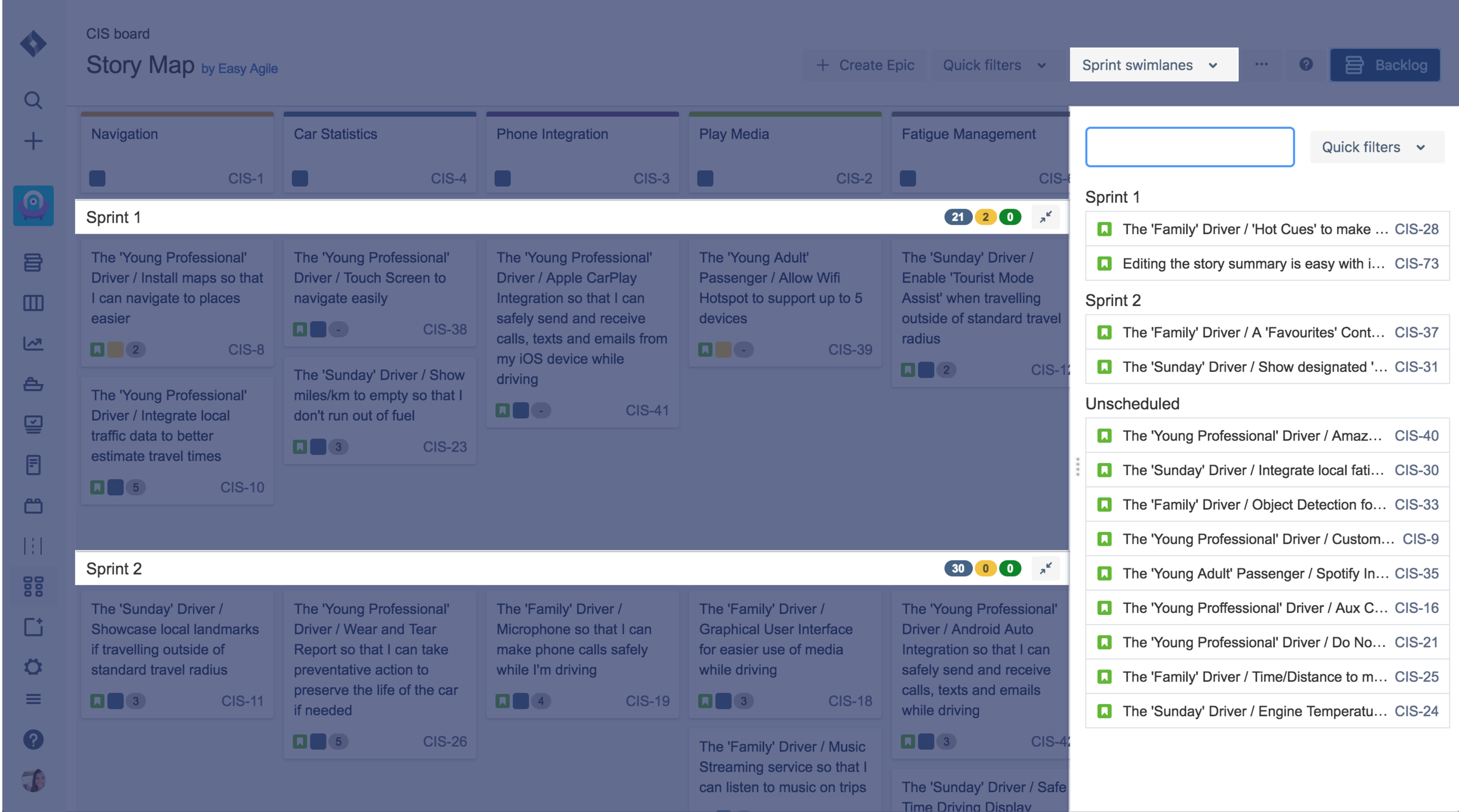
Not having the pop the 'Edit Issue' dialogue, like in the Jira Backlog, makes backlog grooming in the story map fast and collaborative



Refining the Backlog - Sequencing

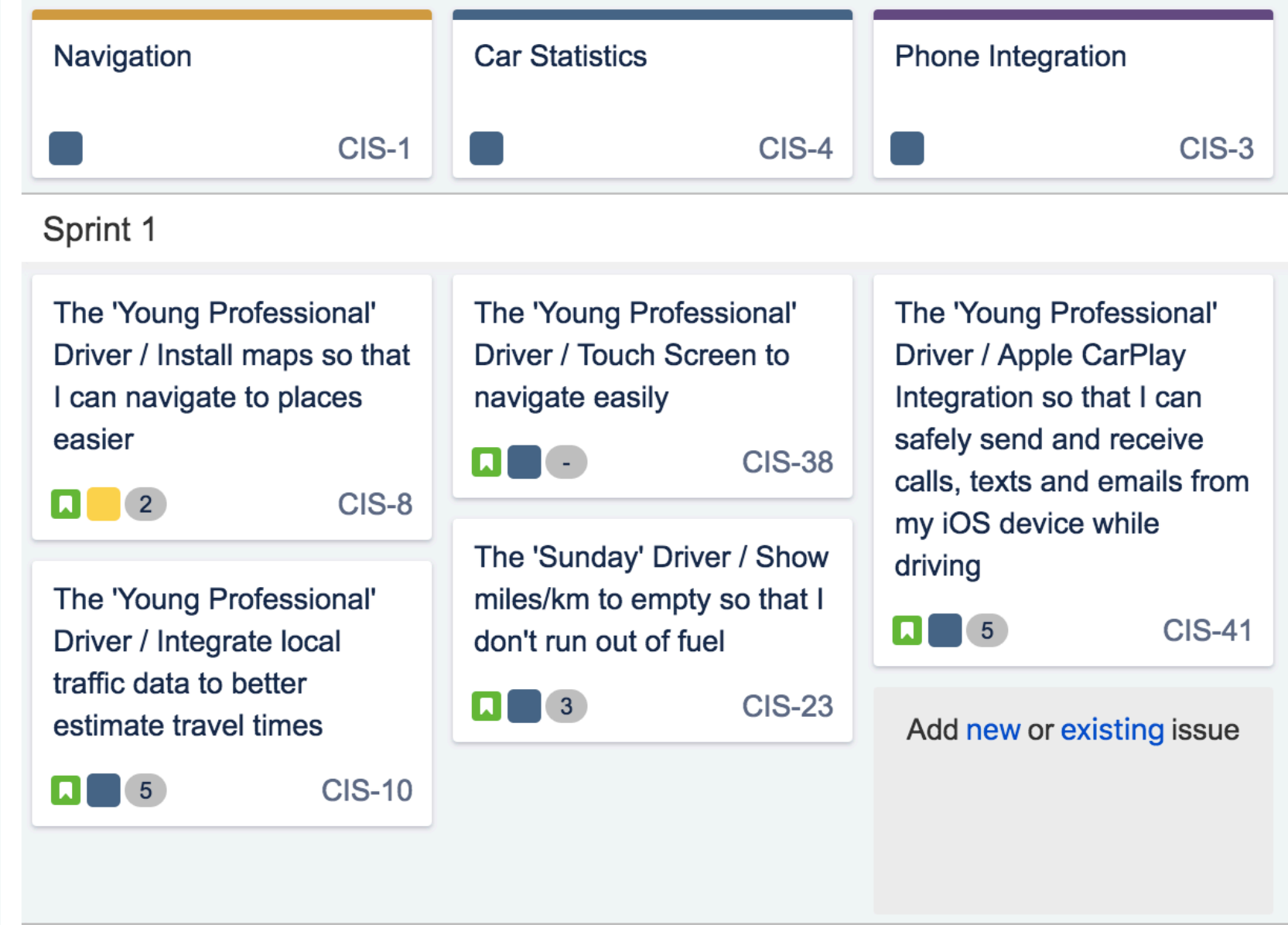
The Story Map and Backlog Panel can be split by Sprints or Versions by selecting the preferred Swimlane from the dropdown at the top of the Story Map.

Work is easily sequenced into Sprints or Versions, by dragging and dropping issues into their designated Swimlanes



Breaking Down Big Stories

Sometimes, a user story is too big to complete as one task. Breaking stories down into a few smaller stories is simple on the backlog with the 'Quick Create' feature.



Quick Create

create tasks, stories or bugs and inline edit the story summary without ever having to leave the Story Map. Hit enter to continue 'quick creating' issues

Create New Issues Inside the Story Map

hover over the space you wish to create a new issue. The 'Add new or existing issue' dialogue will appear. Click new

