

BMW is finally adding Android Auto to its infotainment system

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Android owners take note: from next summer, you will finally be able to cast your phone to new BMWs. After much lobbying from customers, the Bavarian automaker has revealed that at last it is going to add Android Auto support to its iDrive 7 infotainment system next year. This follows news last week that the company is also abandoning its controversial decision to charge an annual fee to enable the similar Apple CarPlay feature used to cast iOS devices to a car's infotainment system.

"Many of our customers have pointed out the importance to them of having Android Auto inside a BMW for using a number of familiar Android smartphone features safely without being distracted from the road, in addition to BMW's own functions and services," said Peter Henrich, senior vice president for product management, BMW, in a statement. From July 2020, that will finally be possible, as long as it's a model with the latest iDrive 7 system.

This past summer Google gave us a big update to Android Auto, making it more capable than when it first appeared in 2015.

For one thing, you no longer need a USB cable to cast from phone to car, although, currently, wireless support is limited to a select number of Google and Samsung devices. And Android users will be delighted to learn that BMW's integration will allow Android Auto to display stuff on the car's main instrument panel and heads-up display, as well as the infotainment screen on the center console.

That may well be the first instance of an automaker integrating either Android Auto or CarPlay this well. Both smartphone OSes were recently updated to allow multiscreen support as opposed to being confined to the infotainment screen. But doing that requires some software work on the car side too, and Google and Apple were ready before any of the automakers.

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