

Google probably won't pull DWI checkpoints from Waze despite NYPD demand

The New York Police Department has sent a letter to Google demanding that it remove drunk-driving checkpoints from its Waze navigation app, as *Streetsblog NYC* and *CBS New York* reported earlier today. In the letter, the NYPD writes that “the posting of such information for public consumption is irresponsible since it only serves to aid impaired and intoxicated drivers to evade checkpoints and encourage reckless driving.”

Reached for comment over email, a Google spokesperson responded in a way that makes it clear the NYPD will need to do a bit more to convince Google to pull the DWI checkpoints:

Safety is a top priority when developing navigation features at Google. We believe that informing drivers about upcoming speed traps allows them to be more careful and make safer decisions when they're on the road.

Last month, Google added speed limit information to Google Maps, and speed trap information has also been rolling out in some areas. Both have long been part of Waze – and for an equally long time, some in law enforcement have been annoyed by the feature. A group from the National Sheriff's Association called for its removal in 2015. Some cops have gone so far as to post fake speed traps to Waze.

Pressure on platform companies has worked in the past. Following an open letter from Senators in March 2011 and a Senate hearing in 2011 wherein Tom Udall asked why Apple and Google had DUI avoidance apps in their stores, Apple banned some checkpoint location apps. Specifically, Apple's policy is

that “Apps may only display DUI checkpoints that are published by law enforcement agencies.” (The nuance there is that many checkpoint locations are published by law enforcement agencies themselves.)

Google did not, and many such apps (including Waze) remain available in the Google Play Store. Chances are, the NYPD’s letter will not be the thing that makes the company change its mind.

<https://www.theverge.com/2019/2/6/18214585/google-dwi-checkpoints-waze-maps-nypd-letter>