Smart glasses company North announces new, essential features for Focals

North, the company behind the Focals smart glasses, announced this week that it's updating its glasses to add new, much-needed functionality. Of most interest to me, and as I noted as a feature I'd like to see in my prior review, the company added support for Spotify controls. Users will be able to skip songs, see a track's title/artist, and adjust the volume of their connected listening device from the glasses' accompanying control ring, called the Loop.

The company's also rolling out direction updates that will provide steps to take for transit, as well as delays. Users can also share their ETAs with contacts. Up until now, Focals could only provide walking directions or the ability to call an Uber. It doesn't provide driving directions, likely because Focals shut off when they think a wearer is driving.

These updates make these glasses more enticing
Additionally, the company introduced a feature called "Rewind" that takes advantage of the glasses' built-in microphone. The glasses capture voice notes, send them back to North's servers, which then process and transcribe them. Users will receive an email with their audio and text notes after they've been processed.

All these features sound nifty and are important for the company's survival. When I reviewed the glasses in February, I specifically called out the fact that they didn't support transit directions – essential for a New Yorker – and that they didn't allow for music playback – a key reason I often

have to check my phone.

I’ll be interested to see how well the transit directions really do detect delays, as right now I have to check the New York City Subway’s Twitter account to get an accurate sense of what’s happening, as well as the limitations of the music controls. North says some features might not be available for non-paying Spotify users. But overall, these features will build out the Focals experience, which is much needed considering that the company laid off 150 employees in February, seemingly in its manufacturing department.

https://www.theverge.com/2019/4/6/18297281/north-focals-smart-glasses-update-software-spotify-navigation-features