Weekly Write-Up: #3

Since 2008, the Google maps app has continued to dominate over the former use of physical maps and printed out directions. The increasingly convenient app with traffic integration is now beginning to include a new controversial feature… at least for one group of people.

Recently google has integrated a feature from its other popular app Waze. The feature allows users to post information like road hazards and police sightings to the app. This feature is welcomed by most users since it helps to avoid tickets and dangerous areas. That is, most users other than the police.

Before this integration into google maps, Waze had some run ins with police over the feature, specifically the NYPD. The NYPD’s argument was that this feature allows the public to “report DWI checkpoints” (Murphy 2019) and needs to be removed immediately. Presumably the argument was that this public posting would alert “terrorists, organized crime groups, and gangs” (Murphy 2019) as the LAPD also stated on a separate occasion. Also adding that “There is no moral, ethical or legal reason to have the police locator button on the app…”(Murphy 2019)

Although law enforcement may not like it, this ability to report the location of officers, much like the right to record officers, is a citizens **negative right**, meaning they should be able to do this without interference. Regardless of this fact there is still backlash from law enforcement providing evidence that there is ulterior motive to their dislike of this feature.

In many states and towns large sums of income are collected from traffic stops. In Boston the amount is $82.04 per person, which is only 3rd to Washington D.C’s $226.78. (Devore 2016)
This is likely a reason why law enforcement dislikes this feature. It ends up costing them money by allowing drivers to avoid traffic tickets.

This new feature that is now in Google maps is helpful and only encourages drivers to be safer and I do not see anything morally or ethically wrong with its implementation. With that the only thing ethically wrong is the push on law enforcement to obtain large amounts of money in traffic stops, sometimes pushing officers to write tickets when a ticket is not warranted. With that, maybe governments should get away from relying on this revenue and seek it elsewhere.

Work Cited
