Trip Radar

Subject: Analysis of the Risks Associated with Uber's "Trip Radar" Feature and Its Incompatibility with London's and other major UK cities driving environment

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to highlight the significant safety concerns posed by Uber's introduction of the "Trip Radar" feature for drivers. This feature, which Uber claims to be safe based on its implementation is entirely unsuitable for the unique complexities of driving environment. As private hire drivers, we vehemently oppose the implementation of this feature due to its potential to endanger drivers, passengers, and pedestrians lives.

Distinctive Nature of Driving Environment:

City driving presents challenges that are fundamentally different from being in rural areas

1. **Higher Population Density:** City population is significantly greater, resulting in more pedestrians, cyclists, e-scooter users, and other road users, which increases the complexity of driving.

2. **Congested Road Networks:** Most city roads are notoriously congested with buses, hackney, cyclists, and private vehicles, creating an environment that demands constant driver vigilance.

3. **Increased Interaction with Vulnerable Road Users**: The presence of tourists unfamiliar with road systems, numerous pedestrians, and cyclists means that any additional distraction increases the risk of accidents.

4. **Heavily Regulated and Policed Environment:** Most cities are subject to extensive regulations enforced by their licensing authorities, requiring Uber drivers to navigate intricate traffic rules and regulations that do not exist to the same extent in rural area. In addition, the largest concentration of Police is always in built up areas where most drivers work. Police patrols are everywhere in marked and unmarked cars [including cars with private hire badge as a decoy], on foot, motor bikes, push bikes etc. Police are always on the look out for drivers using their phones.

It is evident that private hire drivers face unique and multifaceted challenges. Therefore, imposing a feature such as "Trip Radar," which requires frequent and increased interaction with the app, is inherently dangerous especially as the trip radar offers are stacked up in queue, meaning as you reject one, the next is hanging behind to consider.

It also encourages competition among drivers which a quest driver on the trip radar podcast alluded to because, a driver would be conscious that if such job was not quickly taken, a rival driver would beat them to it.

Furthermore, Licensing authorities will and have revoked the licenses of Private Hire Drivers with 6 points for offences deemed to be loss of concentration due to interaction with phones, essentially a single phone offence, so this trip radar feature presents a unique danger to drivers which potentially will lead to loss of livelihood and ultimately an increase in accident or possibly leading to death of other road users.

Impact of the "Trip Radar" Feature on Safety:

The "Trip Radar" feature requires drivers to monitor and engage with the Uber app more frequently, taking their attention away from the road. This increased interaction presents clear safety risks, including:

1. **Distracted Driving:** The feature demands more screen time, diverting drivers' attention from the road to the device. This heightened distraction not only endangers the driver but also puts passengers, pedestrians, and other road users at significant risk.

2. **Reduced Driver Alertness:** The necessity for continuous app interaction increases the potential for reduced driver awareness and slower reaction times, especially in fast-paced and complex traffic environment.

3. **Danger to Vulnerable Road Users**: With more cyclists, pedestrians, and scooter riders on streets, the likelihood of accidents resulting from driver distraction is substantially heightened by this feature.

The British Medical Journal (BMJ) has conducted a study demonstrating the inherent dangers of mobile phone use while driving, as summarised below:

BMJ Study Conclusion:

> "Driver's use of a mobile phone up to 10 minutes before a crash was associated with a fourfold increased likelihood of crashing (odds ratio 4.1, 95% confidence interval 2.2 to 7.7, P < 0.001). Risk was raised irrespective of whether or not a

hands-free device was used (hands-free: 3.8, 1.8 to 8.0, P < 0.001; hand held: 4.9, 1.6 to 15.5, P = 0.003). Increased risk was similar in men and women and in drivers aged ≥ 30 and < 30 years. A third (n = 21) of calls before crashes and on trips during the previous week were reportedly on handheld phones."

Conclusions: The study unequivocally demonstrates that the use of a mobile device, even with a hands-free option, significantly increases the likelihood of a crash resulting in injury. Therefore, the "Trip Radar" feature, which demands frequent interaction with the Uber app, effectively heightens the risk of accidents, placing both drivers and the general public in danger.

Key Questions for Uber's Accountability:

To ensure that all necessary safety protocols have been observed, we request clarity on the following points:

1. **Did you consult all licensing authorities?**: Did Uber engage in any consultation with all local licensing authorities regarding the introduction of this feature because they are responsible for maintaining safety standards on roads in conjunction with Police, and any failure to consult with this body would be a serious oversight.

2. **Safety Studies Conducted by Uber**: Has Uber conducted any safety studies or risk assessments specific to the impact of "Trip Radar" on driver alertness in cities nationwide? Were the unique challenges faced by drivers taken into account, and if so, where are the findings?

3. **Liability of Uber plc**: In the event that this feature leads to accidents, injuries, or fatalities, to what extent will Uber plc accept liability? The increased distraction inherently caused by "Trip Radar" could contribute to incidents, and Uber must clarify its position on assuming responsibility for any such occurrences.

Conclusion:

The introduction of the "Trip Radar" feature represents a significant risk to the safety of Uber drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and other road users. The increased demand for interaction with the app will inevitably lead to heightened distraction and reduced driver alertness, as substantiated by the findings from the BMJ study. The major cities nationwide are very complex and densely populated environment always pose significant risks, making the feature wholly unsuitable especially with enabling law on use and interaction with mobile phones.

Recommendation: We urge Uber to reconsider the deployment of the "Trip Radar" feature anywhere in UK as we now demand its immediate withdrawal and to be discontinued.

GMB Union

The Uber National Commitee