

Figuring out a way around Waze

By Henry Grabar, Slate

In recent years, traffic has gotten bad in the tony Silicon Valley town of Los Altos Hills.

The big-picture problem is that the San Francisco Peninsula has become a global business hub but hasn't adapted its road and rail network (or its housing supply, for that matter) to accommodate that. So there's traffic in places like Los Altos Hills, which straddles Interstate 280 west of Mountain View.

As a result, mobile navigation apps, and especially Waze, the Israeli mapping software owned by Google, have maximized the utility of the local road network by sending drivers off the highway and arterial streets and through residential areas like Los Altos Hills. (Users of the app report traffic patterns and obstructions in real time.)

First, Los Altos Hills asked Waze to remove three roads from its map. Waze does not entertain such requests. So Los Alto Hills came up with a Plan B: Close the streets to people who don't live there. In May, the city erected "No Thru Traffic" signs on three roads where they crossed the city limit. Waze complied, according to a report from the Los Altos Hills manager, which means it will no longer direct users to drive on those streets.

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