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Traffic apps trigger congestion through Clyde Hill

by Joel Moreno
Wednesday, April 12th 2017



A popular shortcut to the State Route 520 bridge is steering drivers onto the streets of this small Eastside community - and raising

safety concerns. (Photo: KOMO News)

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CLYDE HILL, Wash. - A popular shortcut to the State Route 520 bridge is steering drivers onto the streets of this small Eastside community - and raising safety concerns.

The problem, city officials found, are the traffic apps that tell drivers to cut through Clyde Hill. For people headed from the Bellevue area into Seattle, the apps they turn to shave time often direct them through the quietest neighborhoods of Clyde Hill, according to studies by city traffic engineers.

"It's been a problem, and I don't know what they do, because there's so many people who work over here who are trying to get home at night," said Jim Kesl, who lives just off one of the busiest sections along 84th Avenue NE. "It has been where I literally couldn't back up out of my driveway because the cars were lined up, all the way to 24th street."

Instead of detouring through these residential streets, Clyde Hill wants commuters to use Bellevue Way. However, city traffic engineers determined that apps like "Waze" and "Google Maps" tell hurried drivers they can save a minute or more by cutting through town.

“You may save one minute, but it takes a lot more than that if you are involved in an accident,” said neighbor Dat Giap, who has safety concerns about the onslaught of drivers. “Sometimes it’s a little bit ugly with people honking at each other.”

Clyde Hill officials said the plan is to slow down travel times by installing speed signs that flash when cars approach too quickly. If that doesn't work, they might ask WSDOT to tinker with the timing of metering lights for commuters to access Hwy 520.

Calls placed to Google and Waze were not immediately returned.

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