

Google Maps Queue Jumps.

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Google Maps directs me to and from my client sites. I've saved the location of the client's car parks, when I start the app in the morning - it knows where I want to go. When I start it at the end of the day, Google knows where I want to go.

This is great! It guides me around traffic jams, adjusts when I miss a turn and even offers faster routes en-route as they become available.

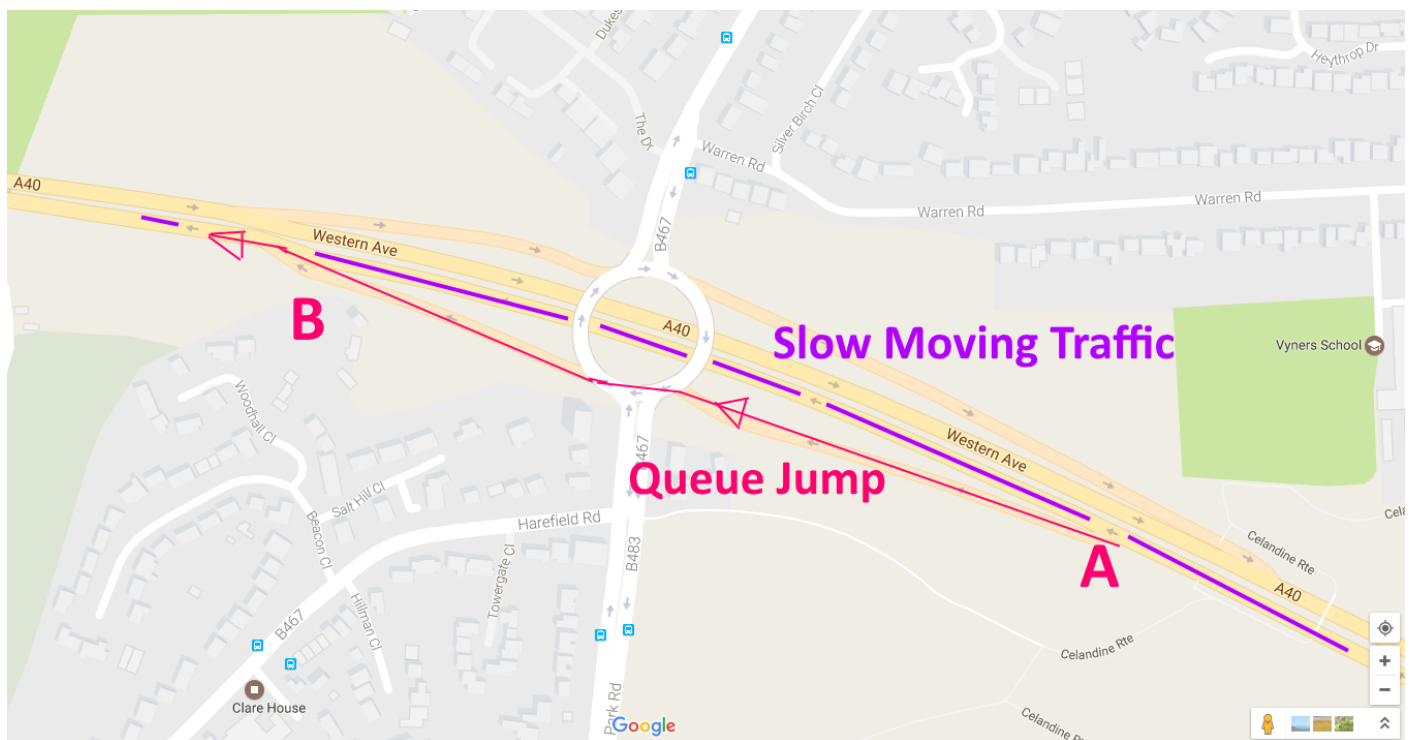
But sometimes Google Maps does something wrong. I don't mean incorrect, like how it sometimes gets a street name wrong (typically in a rural area). I don't mean how its GPS fix might put me in a neighbouring street (10m to my left - when there are trees overhead).

I mean wrong - As in something unfair and socially unacceptable. An action, that if a person did it, would be frowned upon.

Example:

Let's assume a road has a traffic jam, so instead of the cars doing around 60 mph, we are crawling at <10 mph.

In the middle of this traffic jam, the road has a junction, an example is shown here:



Click to enlarge.

Google Maps, using its algorithm/AI, directs me off at exit (A), but rather than finding an alternative route it directs back down on to the road at point (B).

Google Maps has queue-jumped. Google's decision was reasonable and met its goals. Goals, that I assume include reducing journey time (for me). It has bypassed approx 1/4 mile of queuing cars.

It's an intriguing issue, for a number of reasons:

- In cultures where queues are not expected, it might be OK (it's a clever optimisation!)
- Conversely, some cultures may consider it a bug.
- Could we even alter/educate the algorithm to reliably distinguish between some routes (short-cuts) and others (queue-jumps)?
- What else might the AI deem OK, that I would consider wrong?
- What are Google Maps goals? Are they all in my interest and safety?
- These seem very far from pass/fail scenarios

For example, What if Google noticed that users used google, YouTube or its adverts more after a certain route, than if they had taken another?

What if that advert-hungry route was slower? Or more dangerous? (E.g. people use google more after that route, as they need to get their car repaired.)

Are these issues being tested for? Are the right questions being asked?