

BUSINESS

New app warns if railroad crossing is blocked by passing train in Plymouth

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Tired of wasting up to 10 minutes of your precious time waiting for the gates to rise at downtown railroad crossings?

Well, there's an app for that – and it is being refined in downtown Plymouth.

The brainchild of Grosse Ile, Michigan-based Integrated Traffic Solutions, the active but still-under-construction Plymouth Trains app can warn users when a railroad crossing is blocked by a passing train, the time of day or night when there is the best chance for a train to rumble across certain roads and the average wait time at each crossing.

App users can even watch live videos of trains as they motor down the tracks over the focused-upon roads, noted Plymouth City Manager Paul Sincock.

"Integrated Traffic Solutions came to us and asked if we'd be willing to work with them in developing this app," Sincock said. "Knowing how much people dislike waiting at train crossings, we told them absolutely.

"It's especially useful for emergency services vehicles when they're headed to an emergency. They can alter the route they take if they know there's going to be a train blocking a certain



A screenshot of the still-in-the-works Plymouth Trains app. PROVIDED

road. It's a very, very in-depth system they're developing."

Within 24 hours of the launching of the app, 500 people had downloaded it to their smartphones.

The app is in the development stage and is currently only active for the Farmer Street crossing in Plymouth, which has six railroad crossings within its city limits.

The free app is available for downloading on the Apple App Store. An Android version is in the works.

The city and technology firm are working through infrastructure and technology issues to cover the remaining crossings in the city, Sincock said.

"The Farmer Street crossing was a great location to start testing and collecting data because we were able to connect a camera to the back of a nearby building," Sincock said. "With each train that passes, the computer builds algorithms and adds data."

The app is equipped with an optional setting that uses the driver's location and sends a notification when they're within range of a blocked crossing. The "chance of train" feature can help users plan their trip by seeing the likelihood of a blocked crossing.