

Why Is Uber Tracking You After You Are Dropped Off?

December 20, 2016 - Over the past couple of years, I've become a big fan of ride sharing with Uber. After all, I live in metropolitan Los Angeles; a city where mass transit is all but nonexistent and where taxi's cost a fortune. Uber, along with its rival Lyft, has changed that. Based on the things I've heard friends and associates say, I know that I'm not alone. But a recent update to Uber's phone application is making me rethink using the company. Uber is now tracking passengers after they are dropped off. The question is, "Why?"

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Anyone who installs a ride sharing application on their smart phone knows that they are going to be asked to share their location information with the application and the company that owns the application. Agreeing to do that is pretty much a no brainer. After all, when you hail a ride, the driver needs to know where to pick you up.

It is also obvious that the company will have a record of where you are dropped off. Bottom line here is that if you are overly concerned with privacy on a particular trip, you shouldn't use a ride sharing company, a taxi or any other form of public transportation.

But being tracked from your point of pick-up to the point of drop-off is one thing. Tracking your movements after you are dropped off is quite another. And that is exactly what Uber is now doing.

The recent update to their application now tracks passengers for five minutes after they leave the vehicle. Uber claims the change is an attempt "to improve pickups, drop-offs, customer service, and to enhance safety." And while there may be some benefit to some customers, the fact is that users can only turn off tracking by disabling GPS access entirely for the Uber application. Anyone doing that will have to manually type in both their pick up and drop off addresses. Not very convenient.

The problems with this type of tracking are numerous. Anyone with access to the data could potentially find patterns in your travel. Just think what a stalker or burglar might be able to do with that data. The data, which I assume is being stored and archived, could also be subpoenaed for both civil and criminal investigations. There is no telling how damaging that could be.

Even if the application is running in background on your device, it collects and transmits data on your whereabouts.

From a privacy perspective, this change is disconcerting. From a business perspective, the change is bone-headed. As long as Uber insists on tracking me, I'm switching to Lyft. I suspect that I won't be alone.

byJim Malmberg

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