HeadsUp Drive

A traffic gauge for your car — by Duncan Wilcock

HeadsUp Drive isn't very exciting until you start driving, and that's on purpose. It's meant to be calm, not distracting, and to need almost no touching. Think of it as an extra gauge on your dashboard: it shows the traffic and the road beyond the horizon, and turns by itself to face the way you're going. Your attention stays on the road and your hands on the wheel.

I built it in 2013 when I was driving in traffic a lot, and I still use it every time I drive — to see snarl-ups long before I reach them, and where the snow-line is as I drive around British Columbia. It works best in a window or dash mount, and it's great on an everyday commute.

I also love it on long drives with my family - seeing a snarl up 20 minutes or an hour before we reach it gives us time to adapt plans, stop for dinner. The Altitude gives me unexpected insights, especially when driving in mountains, as I do often in British Columbia, Canada.

WHAT THE COLOURS MEAN

- **Green** — vehicle traffic flowing smoothly
- **Orange** — vehicles slowing down
- **Red** — heavy traffic
- **Dark red** — stop-and-go/traffic-jam

Roads with no colour have no traffic report — usually quiet streets.

HOW TO USE IT

- **Mount your phone** where you can glance at it, open the app, and drive. The map follows you, turns to face the way you're going, and looks far ahead — you see much more of what's coming than what's behind.
- **+ and –** zoom in for street detail, or out to see further down the highway.
- **Dark** switches to a night map that's easy on the eyes after sunset.
- The **gear**: traffic colours, this guide, Supporter & Patron, tip jar, links, **Units: mph & feet** and **Follow me as I move**. Above 10 km/h it's locked for safety (see the FAQ).
- Lower left: your **heading, the speed limit** of the road you're on, and your **elevation**.
- The **screen stays on** while the app is open — plug into your car's USB on long drives.
- It needs **location** (while using the app) and a **data connection**.

WHERE THE MAP COMES FROM

The map, places and live traffic are **Google Maps**. Speed limits come from OpenStreetMap, a worldwide map built by volunteers — fetched for the road ahead as you drive. If a speed limit is missing or wrong, anyone can fix it.

Drive safely: glance, don't stare, and never fiddle with your phone while moving. Set it up before you go. Traffic and speed limits can be out of date — trust the road and the signs. Your driving safety is your responsibility.

ABOUT ME

I'm Duncan Wilcock. I build things — apps like HeadsUp Drive and HeadsUp Bike, a see the bike-network map for exploring your city by bike that grew out of this one. I'm a co-founder of Better North Shore, a municipal advocacy group on the North Shore of Vancouver, Canada, and I write at www.wilcock.ca.

- HeadsUp Bike
- www.wilcock.ca
- www.BetterNorthShore.ca

Map, places & traffic: Google Maps · Map data © Google · Speed limits © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL), via the Overpass API

FAQ

Frequently asked questions

Is HeadsUp Drive free?

Yes. The map, the live traffic and the readouts are all free, with no ads. A **Supporter** subscription unlocks Dark mode. A **Patron** subscription does too, shows “Patron” on your map, and helps me build more apps like this one. Bought HeadsUp Drive before it went free? Dark mode is already yours. A HeadsUp Bike Patron on the same iPhone is a Patron here too. The Tip Jar is just a thank-you; tips unlock nothing.

Why is there a subscription for Dark mode, and a Patron one?

Software takes time, attention, effort, expertise and equipment to make. I'm a single developer, one person, and I need to earn a living and pay my expenses. I've made all the core features free, and offer a way to pay a fair fee for the value the app gives you and the work behind it. Software isn't like other products, built once and taken home: it's maintained for as long as it's used, and keeps being fixed and improved. That's why so much software has moved to subscriptions: steady income pays for the ongoing maintenance and improvements. Thank you for your business.

Why is Settings locked while I'm driving?

For your safety. Above **10 km/h**, tapping the gear shows **“Settings screen locked at speed for safety.”** for 5 seconds, instead of opening Settings. If you really need it, say you're a passenger, slide the red **Risk Crashing** slider all the way across: Settings opens, and stays unlocked until you next leave the app. If Settings is open when you pass 10 km/h, it closes.

The map follows me while I drive, even with Follow me as I move off. Why?

Above 10 km/h the map always follows you, so it keeps showing the road ahead and you're never tempted to scroll it back. It keeps following until you slide **Risk Crashing**, or switch **Follow me as I move** in Settings. From then on, the map follows you only if Follow me as I move is on.

Where do the traffic colours come from?

Google Maps' live traffic. Green is flowing, orange slowing, red heavy, dark red stop-and-go. A road with no colour has no traffic report, usually a quiet street.

The speed limit shows “--”. Why?

The road you're on has no speed limit in OpenStreetMap yet, or the app hasn't matched you to a road. Anyone can add a missing limit at openstreetmap.org/fixthemap; it shows up here within a day or two.

Will it drain my battery?

The screen stays on while the app is open, which uses battery. Plug into your car's USB on long drives. Dark mode is easier on the battery of phones with OLED screens, and on your eyes at night.

Does it need a data connection?

Yes: the map and the live traffic come over the internet, and it needs your location (while using the app). Your location stays on your phone; there's no account and no sign-up.

How do I manage or cancel my subscription?

In your iPhone's Settings › your name › Subscriptions, or **Manage subscription** in the app. New phone? Tap **Restore Purchases** in the app's Settings.

How do I get in touch?

Through www.headsupdrive.com/contact. I read everything.