Companion App User Research Report

Interview Objectives:

1. Determine what demographic the application's current UI caters to and their common modes of transportation
2. Understand the goals users have to feel safe when travelling and where the application lacks in meeting those goals
3. Evaluate the discoverability of the application's current features and their usefulness to users

Preliminary Questions:

Before delving into the application itself, we asked a couple of questions first to know more about them as a user and their goals. A summary of the answers are as follows:

1. What do you do? What is your current occupation/major? Are you employed? *University student, various science-related majors, unemployed.*
2. How many hours in a week do you commute alone, either using public transit, walking, bike, or using the car? *4-8 hours.*
3. What safety concerns do you have when you do commute? Are there any precautions that you currently take (ex. texting/calling friends/relatives that you're heading out, putting a contact on speed dial, etc.) to help you feel more safe? What precautions would you like to take but don't have time to set-up? *Text or call a family member or friend before leaving current location, getting a ride instead of walking, and not listening to music to be more aware of surroundings.*
4. How many times have you used the Companion App? *3-5 times.*

Scenarios:

For the next step of the interview, we conducted *think aloud* tests by giving users some *goal-based scenarios*. We had them vocally walk us through the steps they would take to complete the goal outlined by the scenario. Out of the seven scenarios we gave them, there were three that produced pain points and frustrations of interest:

	Goal	Scenario	Results
1.	Start and end a trip using the map	You are about to leave your current destination for a walk in the evening around a park in Surrey. Since you're going through this park alone, you decide to use the app to inform your friends or family in case anything happens. You know it's geographical location (it's really large and Fraser Hwy runs through it), but not its name. Using this information, start and end a trip.	Users would navigate the map and attempt to search for the park, but would then exit the app "because it's faster" to use search engines like Google or Google Maps itself to find the exact address or name of the park, which is Green Timbers Park.
2.	Set the app to Wander mode	You have arrived at the park. You are about to start your walk, but don't have a particular destination in mind. You still want to use the app to keep your friends or family informed. Using this information, start and end a trip which lasts for 1h 30m.	Now that they knew the name of the park, they would start typing in the app's search bar "Green Timbers Park" to start their trip normally. During this, they would see a "Wander mode" banner above their search results, but did not know what it was. After starting their trip, they would move the pin icon from the center to the other end of the park.
3.	Add a new companion for a trip that is not in the user's contacts	You are planning to attend a group study session held at an area on campus you are not familiar with. You want to add the members of your study group as companions. You do not remember their phone numbers, but you do have them as friends on social media. Using this information, add one of them as your companion.	Users would exit the app and resort to using mobile instant messaging services like Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, or WeChat to contact their study members. They would ask for their phone numbers through these apps to add them as an companion, or give up using Companion all together and use the above apps instead.

Feedback:

After going through the scenarios, we concluded the interview by asking users to give general feedback about the application, such as first impressions when they first downloaded the app, likes and dislikes they have developed during the two weeks they have been using the app, comments from their companions (if any), and if the app overall made them feel safer whenever they travelled alone.

They first expressed their appreciation for the app's rationale and concept to keep users connected to friends and loved ones so they're "one call away" in signs of trouble, but they

found themselves limiting their usage of Companion because its location services consumes a lot of battery and data. Users kept referencing their mental model of the Google Maps app, since it uses little data to start navigation from point A to point B in which the users can turn off their data afterwards and still track their location throughout their trip.

Another user was also bothered by how call-dependent the application was. She only had the option of initiating a call with her companion or calling the authorities if she wanted to specify why she felt nervous or needed help. To her, the "I Feel Nervous" is ambiguous for her companions and in relation to what another user said about this particular issue, her companion might not take her plea for help seriously because they might not know the reason behind it.

In addition, there was a divide between users who commuted using public transportation and walked versus those who drove. Users that relied on cars as their main mode of transportation found little use for the app. They actually found it cumbersome to use while driving because they had to unlock their phone, open the app, and then decide which buttons to press to fulfill their task. There was also no way for them to find an alternate route if they wanted to avoid an obstacle like traffic or lose a hypothetical individual trying to follow them. Nevertheless, these are pain points which can be fanned out to any user regardless of their mode of transportation.