

## Wayfindr: Empowering vision impaired people to travel independently

UK– Royal London Society for Blind People (RLSB): Wayfindr

### SUMMARY OF PROJECT

The mission of Wayfindr is to create an Open Standard for Audio Wayfinding. The standard helps the makers of wayfinding products to create experiences that are consistent, seamless, and reliable. Moreover, the implementation of such a standard will empower vision-impaired people to move independently throughout their various environments – whether completing day-to-day tasks or exploring new places around the world – by giving them access to reliable, consistent directions from their smart phones and other devices. Wayfindr will also be leading the way in the installation of Beacon technology in underground rail networks, for the first time opening up fully independent travel in cities such as London to vision-impaired people.

### QUOTE:

*“Being able to travel is essential to self-actualisation for blind people. A bad journey means that they are late for work, job interviews, etc., and it affects their socialising with friends and family. Persistent bad experiences lead to a reticence to use public transport and often to isolation.”*

—Dr. Tom Pey, Chief Executive, RLSB

### FACTS & FIGURES

- 270 underground stations in London could be equipped with beacons.
- An estimated 2 million people living with sight loss in the UK could benefit from this technology.
- The Royal London Society for Blind People has received £2,000 in project development support from NESTA (Centre for Challenge Prizes in the United Kingdom) and over £30,000 of support through Comic Relief's Tech for Good programme and \$1m from Google.org.

## PROBLEMS TARGETED

Visually impaired people are often unable to travel independently on public transport, forced to rely on assistance from station staff, which is unpredictable at best. These people could easily get lost, find themselves in a dangerous situation, or never go out at all. In order to put one's trust in such a service, one first needs a certain level of quality assurance.

## SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

In order to feel confident to travel using a smartphone, one needs clear, consistent directions no matter what environment one may be in (e.g., from rail to bus, from train to plane, etc.). Wayfindr will open up a world in which the vision-impaired people are able to enjoy the benefits and conveniences of travel and transportation. Users do not need an expensive bespoke assistive device for wayfinding. Rather, there is a pressing need to develop a consistent standard to be implemented across existing wayfinding systems.

## OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

It is envisaged that in five years' time a number of cities across the world will have adopted the Wayfindr standard as part of their transportation networks, thus enabling vision-impaired people to travel independently. Millions of people will be able to lead significantly improved lives, and in many cases travel independently to and from work. Wayfindr has the potential to become the de-facto standard of audio-based wayfinding for the visually impaired. At the moment, there is no equivalent to such a standard.

Photo

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