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NAVIGATION APP SHOWS NOCTURNAL WALKERS THE BEST-LIT ROUTE HOME

 WORK & LIFESTYLE

Rudder is a smartphone mapping tool which hopes to help prevent sexual assaults by enabling users to find their most well-lit route.

A shocking number of female students are the targets of sexual assault — a study carried out by the US Department of Justice in 2007 reported that one in five women at university are victims of attempted or completed attacks — which makes the prospect of walking home alone a very real risk for young women on campus. Hoping to lessen the danger, **Rudder** is a new app developed by two graduates from the University of Michigan, which helps users find their best-lit route.

The startup behind Rudder has collected street lighting data from various US cities so that when users enter their desired journey, the app's algorithm offers the most illuminated route, rather than the quickest. The idea is to help users avoid particularly dark streets. The app is currently in Beta and welcoming users from Ann Arbor, Chicago, Boston and more. While it is initially being targeted at the student population, it could certainly be useful elsewhere too. The final version of the app is expected to include turn-by-turn notifications which will let the user follow instructions without taking their phone out of their pocket, and the ability to share travel progress with friends and family.

We have seen a number of innovative products designed to help women protect themselves against assault: **Undercover Colors** is a nail polish that changes color when it comes into contact with known date rape drugs and **The Defender** is a multi-tool rape alarm. But of course, prevention is very much preferable to self defense and Rudder is an useful tool for helping members of the public get from one point to another as safely as possible.

Are there other ways of adjusting the priorities of navigation apps to suit different purposes?

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