

20060 Commuters can get paid to take public transport

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Auckland commuters can now earn money while taking public transport – and by the end of February those in most other main centres will be able to do that too. A free Kiwi-made app called Frenzy, which launched on Wednesday, pays people who use it to plan their bus, train or ferry trip and then view marketing content during the ride.

Users receive "Frenzy dollars" for each video they watch, game they play or quiz they take while travelling.

Frenzy dollars are similar to airpoints and can be deposited into a user's bank account, spent at partner retailers, including Spark and McDonalds, or donated to charity.

Frenzy's co-founder and chief operating officer Kathleen Webber said while the start-up made its money in a similar way to other digital media channels, such as Google or Facebook, where advertisers pay to get their ads shown to users, it was unique in giving users a cut. "We're rewarding people for their time. We don't want to be like every other tech company that takes all the profits. We think it's really important to share the benefits with the users who are giving us their data."

The content that users engage with won't necessarily look like a traditional commercial, she said. "It's more than just like 'buy this fridge'. It could be 'here's a bank giving financial tips' or we talked to a provider who is keen to give some healthcare advice. You could test the level of a game, you could do some market research."

Webber said users' privacy was important to Frenzy and advertisers only receive anonymised information about user engagement. For example, it might tell them that the average age of users who watched a video was 21, but it won't reveal all users' ages.

Because the company prides itself on being sustainable, it offsets the carbon emissions of users' journeys by buying carbon credits from schemes approved by Toitū Envirocare.

Frenzy works by using publicly-available real time data on public transport routes and timetables and user location data, so the technology can see where the bus, train or ferry is and where the person is. If those locations consistently match, the technology recognises the user is on public transport and shows them content.

Frenzy is available on iOS and Android and currently works in Auckland.

It is expected to expand operations to Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Queenstown, Hamilton and Tauranga by the end of February, before launching in Australia in March.

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