How long is that commute? New tool tells you in minutes, not miles

An otherwise perfect home can be ruined by a long or heavily congested commute — and that's why Canadian real estate website provider Real Estate Webmasters (REW) has launched a new feature that shows drive-times for properties listed on local MLS networks.

Drive Time, a technology developed by big data company Inrix, allows homebuyers and agents to search for properties based on desired drive times, and time spent in traffic. Using data from government road sensors, car companies and real-time traffic speeds, the tool tells users just how much time a homeowner can expect to spend in traffic when driving from a particular house on any given day.

It works like this: REW, which helps real estate agents advertise online, will now have a search feature that filters property listings not just by physical distance but by the actual time spent on the road. A homebuyer can either check the drive time on a particular property or automatically search for homes that fall within a desired commute. REW currently works with over 480 MLSs across the U.S. and Canada.

"You get a much better predictor of the value of a home's ability to put time back in your life," REW founder and CEO Morgan Carey told Inman.

While popular navigation apps like Waze already offer distances and driving routes, Drive Time calculates actual traffic time rather than distance, Carey said.

"Drive Time polygons are morphing shapes, constructed by data points and transportation infrastructure, which help agents identify all the neighborhoods within the specified drive time," Kevin Foreman, a vice president and general manager at Inrix, said in a statement.

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According to REW, 70 percent of homebuyers consider drive time when choosing a home, but many fail to see that the quality of the commute is more important than the distance.

“Sometimes even 3 kilometers [1.9 miles] on a terrible traffic route can take an hour,” Carey said. “Those are things homebuyers want to know about a house because they can really affect your quality of life.”

REW also plans to roll out features that allow homebuyers to overlay different family members’ commutes and driving routes. Carey believes that, with the help of Drive Time, real estate professionals will be able to offer their clients a greater variety of homes, including ones that may otherwise have been crossed out for being too far away.

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