

House Judiciary Committee Witness Testimony

Reviving Competition, Part 1: Proposals to Address Gatekeeper
Power and Lower Barriers to Entry Online

February 25, 2021

Eric Gundersen, CEO, Mapbox

Chairman Cicilline, Ranking Member Buck, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to be here today. My name is Eric Gundersen and I'm the co-founder and CEO of Mapbox, a mapping and location company.

We make maps. But we don't have an app that you download. Our customers are developers. We provide the technology (APIs and SDKs) that lets them add maps to their apps and websites, from weather forecasts to delivery apps, to major news sites, to social messaging, to automotive. People pay Mapbox for maps because our maps help business run better. Mapbox maps make sure your online order gets to you as quickly as possible. We help drivers save hours each day avoiding traffic, finding charging stations, saving fuel. Our maps help you find local shops in your neighborhood, understand public health data, and see when it's going to rain. We are even working to make the maps in your car finally be accurate so you can stop duct taping your phone to the dashboard. (Stay tuned, cars using Mapbox start shipping this year.)

Maps will be critical to a huge number of future industries and technologies as well, from drones to delivery, to electric vehicles, to autonomous vehicles and augmented reality navigation.

We started ten years ago in D.C., building tools for the international development community, mapping clinics in Nigeria and deforestation in Southeast Asia. In 2009, I was in Afghanistan supporting the State Department, digitizing old Soviet maps to help monitor the country's first democratic presidential election. We needed better mapping tools to do our job, so we built those tools. We then opened our tools up to other businesses, launching Mapbox as a platform for anyone to use. We've grown from there. In total, we serve maps to 700 million monthly active users. Today we have more than 2.6 million developers registered, almost half of the Fortune 500 companies on our platform, thousands of paying customers and we are generating close to \$100 million in annual recurring revenue.

Our main competitor is Google Maps. And while we've had success, it's all relative when you're competing against giants. In 2017, analysts estimated that if Google Maps was a stand alone company it would be valued at more than \$60 billion. That was a few years ago; I'm sure it's much higher today.

This committee is holding a hearing to better understand how gatekeeping works, so let me be clear: the gatekeeping is brazen and happening right in front of us, posted on Google's website in their own Terms of Service. There's a lot that could be said about how we got to this point, but I'd like to focus on what can be done today. I need your help now. My customers need your help now. I need Google Maps to stop bullying and intimidating customers who want to both pay for Google Search and to use Mapbox maps.

The problem is that Google uses its dominance in search to suppress competition in maps.

All of us have searched for something on Google. All of us have looked at a Google Map. All of us can see that search and maps are different products. But Google's Terms of Service state if

you're a developer using Google Search on a map, that map has to be a Google Map instead of another company's map, like Mapbox:

(e) No Use With Non-Google Maps. To avoid quality issues and/or brand confusion, Customer will not use the Google Maps Core Services **with or near a non-Google Map in a Customer Application**. For example, Customer will not **(i) display or use Places content on a non-Google map**, **(ii) display Street View imagery and non-Google maps on the same screen**, or **(iii) link a Google Map to non-Google Maps content or a non-Google map**.¹

So in order to use Google Search with a map, developers are forced to use Google Maps, and only Google Maps. There's no technical reason to restrict interoperability in this way. Customers—developers—should be able to buy whatever maps they think are the best solution for their needs without anti-competitive interference from Google.

Unfortunately, this problem is getting worse. More and more of our customers have been targeted by these exclusionary practices over the years, which force them to stop using Mapbox. Not because Google Maps is a better product but only because of Google's restrictive Terms of Service.

This is bigger than Mapbox. Tying together Google Search with Google Maps is not just anticompetitive for Mapbox. It impacts a huge number of developers and customers because it prevents developers from building the best product possible. We've watched customers spend months dismantling what they had built because of threats from Google.

This problem will get more complicated in the future with subscription bundling of services that create full ecosystem lock in—just look at the deal last week with Google Maps and Ford. That is a 6 year several billion dollar deal that not only locks Ford into Google Maps and Google Automotive Services, but also obligates Ford to use Google Cloud rather than staying with Microsoft Azure.

Gatekeeping today not only drives short term dollars to Google, it's blocking competition long term by blocking product development and innovation. Maps get better when more people use them. By blocking customers from using Mapbox today, Google deprives us of the data and scale we need to grow and make better products, which makes it harder for us to build more competitive maps and compete against Google in the future. And all of this hurts our customers, our developers, and the products they are building.

Mapbox has been fortunate, thanks to a talented team that has built some amazing technology and developers who believe in us. But we're an exception. When we started, dozens of investors told us we were crazy to take on Google. How many other folks with great ideas didn't make it this far? We are all losing out on innovation because of this chilling effect.

¹ <https://cloud.google.com/maps-platform/terms> (emphasis added).

We want to be able to compete on a level playing field—to be able to sell our products to customers who want them.

Thank you Chairman Cicilline, Ranking Member Buck, and Members of the Committee for the great reports you've put out and the attention you've paid to these issues. This Committee has already done important work describing the problem. Now we need rules of the road that are not only clear but actually enforced.

It is an honor of a lifetime to be called upon by your country to help build a strong economy and to continue improving America's competitiveness and invention. Thank you all for this opportunity.