Google allows users to share their locations in mapping app

Alphabet Inc's Google announced on Wednesday that it will revamp its popular maps app to allow users to share their locations, in order to boost engagement on a product of increasing strategic importance to the search giant.

Within the next week, users worldwide will be able to share where they are in real time on devices running both Google's Android operating system and Apple Inc's iOS software, Google said. The feature is part of an array of new tools aimed at boosting the effectiveness of Google Maps, which analysts say is critical to the company's ambitions in commerce and transport.

The location-sharing feature is aimed at helping people find each other in crowded places, such as concerts and conferences, and users will retain control over who they share their whereabouts with and for how long, said Google executive Jen Fitzpatrick, who leads Google Maps.