

## BUSINESS

# MapQuest gets a new look after Verizon takes over

By **TAMARA CHUANG** | [tchuang@denverpost.com](mailto:tchuang@denverpost.com) | The Denver Post

PUBLISHED: October 19, 2015 at 3:02 pm | UPDATED: April 21, 2016 at 12:30 am

With a [new owner](#) that has access to more than [100 million mobile customers](#), MapQuest is navigating its way back to the nation's radar.

On Tuesday, the Denver-based digital map service plans to unveil a wealth of upgrades, including a revamped map, website and feature-heavy mobile app. There's a new logo, new navigation tools and new partnerships with Uber, Car2Go and Denver's Regional Transportation District.

"Our aim is to lead the market and really try to capture some of these younger users who may not be familiar with MapQuest," said Leila Qualheim, MapQuest's director of communications. "We are really in a great situation right now with Verizon in the picture. And we're really hoping that we will become the default."

Telecom giant Verizon Communications got MapQuest in its \$4.4 billion purchase of AOL Inc. in May.

MapQuest, the once beloved map service consumers would use to print out for mobile directions, moved to the back burner last decade after the rise of Google Maps and Apple's iPhone. Those companies had a feature MapQuest just couldn't compete with: being the default map on smartphones. Consumers who opted for MapQuest have had to physically choose — and configure their phones — to use the service.

"They (MapQuest) were the leader and then they let it slip away and to a certain extent, they underestimated mobile," said Roger Entner, founder and analyst with [Recon Analytics](#), a Boston consultant and market researcher.

Its future could go either way, Entner said. Verizon picked up MapQuest "by accident because it was part of the advertising platform that they really wanted," he said. "This bodes pretty well for MapQuest because it could become the designated map solution for Verizon."

Then again, mapping is not Verizon's core business. The company could shut down or sell off the mapping service, he said.

Entner also pointed to Title II of the Communications Act, better known as [the Net Neutrality rule](#), that requires Internet providers to be fair to all Web traffic. That could prevent Verizon from favoring its mapping solution over a competitor's.

"There's only so much they can do to help but generally, Verizon is very good to the companies it acquires," Entner said. "The thing is that smartphones are mostly controlled by Apple and by Google. I tried unsuccessfully to delete Apple's map application and Google's from Android and iOS and it doesn't work."

Mobile Americans haven't ignored MapQuest entirely. According to online traffic researcher comScore Inc., MapQuest ranks a solid third for mobile users in the U.S. with 23.1 million unique mobile users last month, compared with Google's 110.9 million and Apple's 51.6 million.

"All three are growing on mobile, but MapQuest is down 18 percent on desktop, whereas Google is still up 22 percent on that platform," said Adam Lella, a comScore senior analyst.

For desktop users, Google trounced the others with 61 million unique visitors last month, while second place MapQuest had 21.6 million. Apple doesn't have a desktop version.

MapQuest has been working on its new map for the past 18 months, MapQuest's consumer products chief Kacy Beitel said.

The desktop map is now mobile friendly and has integrated nearly everything one can think of — from quickly seeing Yelp ratings, to making a reservation on OpenTable or requesting an Uber ride all within the MapQuest app.

"It's a mobile-first mentality," Beitel said. "We still have a lot of desktop users but we've got to take care of our new users and not just with a mobile app."


The new MapQuest also offers a variety of layers so travelers can quickly see what most mapping services offer, but also adding details like restaurant reviews, gas station prices and links to business websites.

In Denver, where MapQuest employs about 100 people, there are more features than other cities.

One includes options access to RTD options after a user searches for directions on the app. Most MapQuest users can compare driving routes plus cost and time of using Uber, Car2Go and walking — and it estimates how many calories a walker would burn.

“We can’t compete with (Google), but we can make sure that we’re number two on that list. We know downloading an extra app is something people have to think about,” Beitel said. “But we hope that as we add these new features, our awareness still grows.”

*Tamara Chuang: [tchuang@denverpost.com](mailto:tchuang@denverpost.com) or visit [dpo.st/tamara](http://dpo.st/tamara)*



Tamara Chuang of The Denver Post.

**Tamara Chuang**  
Tamara Chuang covers personal technology and local tech news for The Denver Post. She loves figuring out how things work and explaining them either through words, graphics or video. Find out how to contact her at [dpo.st/tamara](http://dpo.st/tamara)

[Follow Tamara Chuang @gadgetress](#)

SPONSORED CONTENT

**Can A Call From Mom Calm A Child's Nerves?**

Sponsored By Connatix

Scientists the University of Wisconsin-Madison polled a group of girls between the ages of 7 and 12. They found that a simple call from Mom has the same calming effect as getting a hug from her.