



Apple Is About to Reveal Facebook's Shady Location Tracking

Description

In just a few days, **Apple** ([NASDAQ: AAPL](#)) will release iOS 13, the latest version of its mobile operating system that it detailed at [WWDC in June](#). As part of the Cupertino [tech giant's](#) ongoing privacy crusade, the update will include even more features designed to strengthen privacy protections for users. Specifically, iOS 13 will have additional location controls and more detailed notifications so users can know when an app is tracking them in the real world.

People might start wondering why **Facebook** (NASDAQ: FB) wants access to their device's Bluetooth connection.

All the better to track you with

Beta users of iOS 13 are starting to report notifications about Facebook requesting access to Bluetooth, despite the fact that the social networking app has no apparent need for that connectivity. It's not as if the Facebook app streams audio to Bluetooth speakers or otherwise needs to transmit data using the short-range wireless protocol.

Instead, Facebook is using Bluetooth data in conjunction with other information like Wi-Fi networking data and cell towers to track physical locations. The breadth of information that the social networking giant is vacuuming up is simply staggering. For example, in a letter to Congress last summer, Facebook explained that it collects things like cellular signal strength, mouse movements on computers, GPS location, IP addresses, time zones, Bluetooth signals, nearby Wi-Fi networks, and much, much more.

But most people don't read congressional correspondence. They do see big pop-up notifications on their smartphones, though.

Facebook tries to preemptively address criticisms

Realizing that iOS 13's privacy features might trigger more backlash, Facebook had actually already

tried to get ahead of the criticism by penning a [blog post](#) last week explaining how — and why — Facebook collects all of this data. “Facebook is better with location,” writes Facebook location engineering director Paul McDonald.

Location data is used to check in to places, plan events with friends, and — of course — target ads. That type of data will also be instrumental for Facebook Dating, the matchmaking service that the company launched in the U.S. earlier this month.

In addition to iOS 13, [Android 10](#) also has similar new controls around granting access to location data. Note that the blog post does not mention Bluetooth at all. Facebook says users remain in firm control over “who sees your location on Facebook,” advising users to explore their device settings for location services. But even that may not be enough to stop Facebook from snooping.

“We may still understand your location using things like check-ins, events and information about your internet connection,” the company says.

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