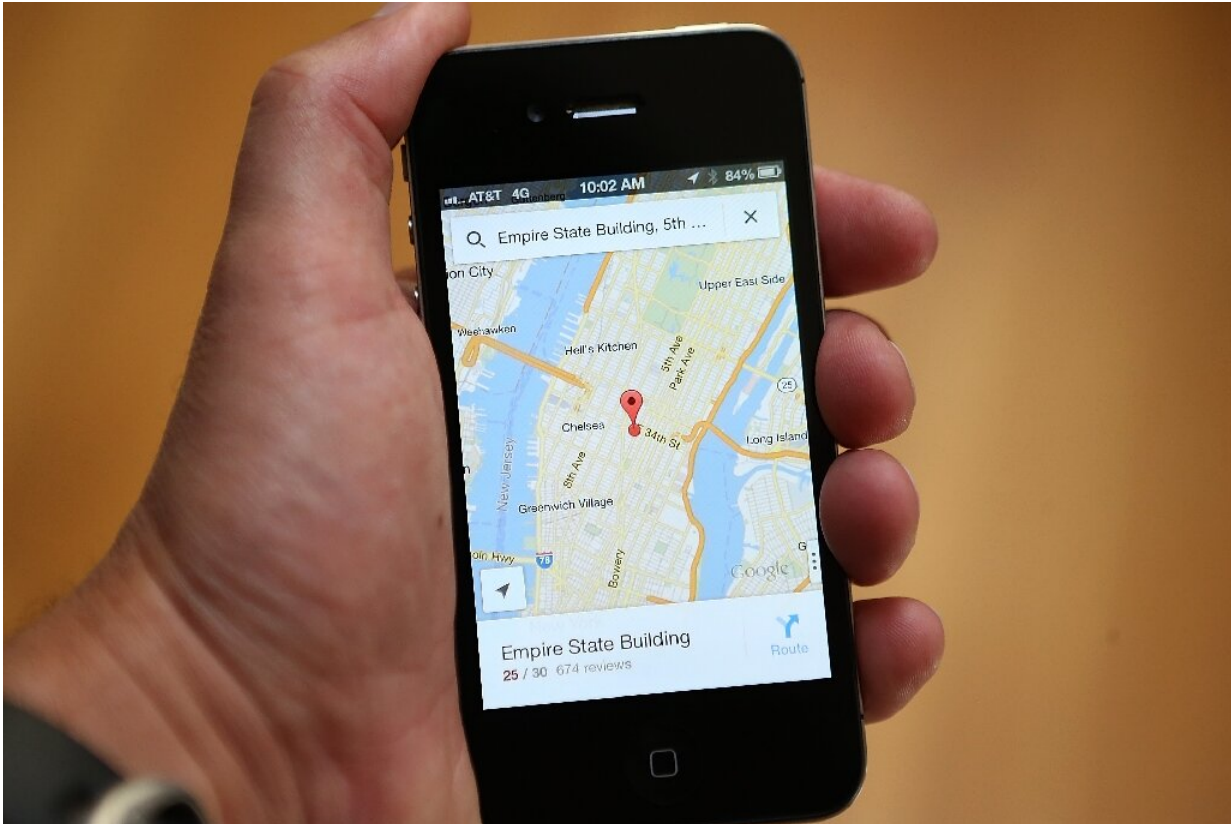# Google rivals join forces in online maps

December 16 2022

A new foundation unveiled by the nonprofit Linux Foundation brings together tech titans such as Amazon Microsoft and Meta to make open source data sets for building mapping capabilities into apps or other internet offerings.

Google rivals on Thursday unveiled a project to make freely available data sets for map features to be built into online offerings.

Alphabet-owned Google dominates online mapping, selling its services to other companies or platforms and using location and navigation capabilities to enhance its other offerings, including online advertising.

Meta, Microsoft, TomTom and Amazon Web Services have now introduced what they call the Overture Maps Foundation, the goal of which is to make comprehensive mapping data openly available for use by whoever may need it, the nonprofit Linux Foundation said in a release.

"Mapping the physical environment and every community in the world, even as they grow and change, is a massively complex challenge that no one organization can manage," said Linux Foundation executive director Jim Zemlin.

"Industry needs to come together to do this for the benefit of all."

Google was notably absent from the list of companies teaming up in Overture, which said its goal is to expand membership to speed up progress.

The coalition expected to release its first mapping datasets by the middle of next year.

"Immersive experiences, which understand and blend into your physical environment, are critical to the embodied internet of the future," Maps at Meta engineering director Jan Erik Solem said in the release.

"By delivering interoperable open map data, Overture provides the foundation for an open metaverse built by creators, developers, and businesses alike."

Map data already underlies applications for search, navigation, logistics,

games, autonomous driving and more, according to the Linux Foundation.

Overture map data will be open source, meaning developers are free to not only use it but to build on it, the Linux Foundation said.

© 2022 AFP