Location-Based Services and Privacy

Key Points

- Location-based services offer many useful apps, such as real-time maps and the ability to locate local businesses, but customers will not fully adopt the services unless proper privacy safeguards are in place.

- Microsoft's privacy standards govern the development and deployment of its location-based services and apps. These include procedures for customer notification and consent, data security, and privacy controls.

- Microsoft believes that the information and communications industry should work with civil society, governments, and others to create appropriate guidance for protecting the privacy of personal location data.

BACKGROUND

Location-based services give customers information based on their geographic location. They offer real-time navigation software, social networks that allow customers to check in as they go from place to place, local weather, geographically targeted search engine results, and other useful functions. The geolocation data is gathered in a number of ways—through global positioning system (GPS) technology built into devices, IP addresses, or Wi-Fi network mapping.

A 2010 survey[1] conducted for Microsoft in the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, the United States, and Canada found that 94 percent of customers who had used location-based services considered them valuable. However, the same survey found that 52 percent were concerned about the potential for loss of their privacy through the use of geolocation data.

Among the privacy concerns related to location-based services:

- **Notice.** Customers want to receive adequate notice that an app will collect and use their geolocation data and give their consent for it to do so.

- **Control.** Customers want to have access to and be able to limit the collection and use of their data.

- **Retention.** Customers want to be informed about the policies that govern the retention of their data.

- **Reuse.** Customers want to choose how their data will be used and how it might be combined with other data.

- **Disclosure to third parties.** Customers want to control how their data is shared with third-party apps.

- **Court orders.** Customers want to be know if their geolocation data might be requested and released by court order.

MICROSOFT APPROACH

Microsoft is involved in many aspects of providing LBS, including as a provider of apps and as an operating system platform for third-party apps, both of which use LBS.

- Microsoft applications that use location-based products and services undergo a privacy review designed to identify issues and help product teams follow Microsoft privacy policies and standards.

- Windows Phone applications that use location are contractually required to provide the ability to turn off that application's access to an individual's location.

- Users can control a number of features that impact their privacy by using the **Express Settings** or **Customize** options. These may include features that may share information with apps, such as a single setting to manage access to the Windows Location Platform.

  If the platform is turned on when a user runs a Windows Store app for the first time, Windows will ask the user whether the app may access the user's location. Conversely, if the platform is turned off, apps cannot use the Windows Location Platform to access the user's location. At any time while using a Windows Store app, the user may easily enable or disable use of location.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Microsoft has a longstanding commitment to privacy legislation initiatives that facilitate the free flow of information, build trust, and encourage innovation.

- As governments address issues associated with emerging technologies and online services, it is important that they not stifle innovation and technology adoption in the process.

Helpful Resources

An overview of Microsoft privacy policies and initiatives
www.microsoft.com/privacy

Microsoft's privacy principles
www.microsoft.com/privacy/principles.aspx

Bing Maps privacy questions and answers
www.microsoft.com/maps/streetside.aspx

Windows 8 app certification requirements
aka.ms/app-cert

Windows Phone Privacy Resources
aka.ms/WindowsPhone-Privacy