

Apple Wants You to Get Accustomed to Real-Time Tracking

Tracking tech compliments ongoing and evolving surveillance by the NSA

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Tech giant Apple is not coy about it. They want you to get used to real-time tracking. That's why they are changing Find My Friends to Track My Friends.

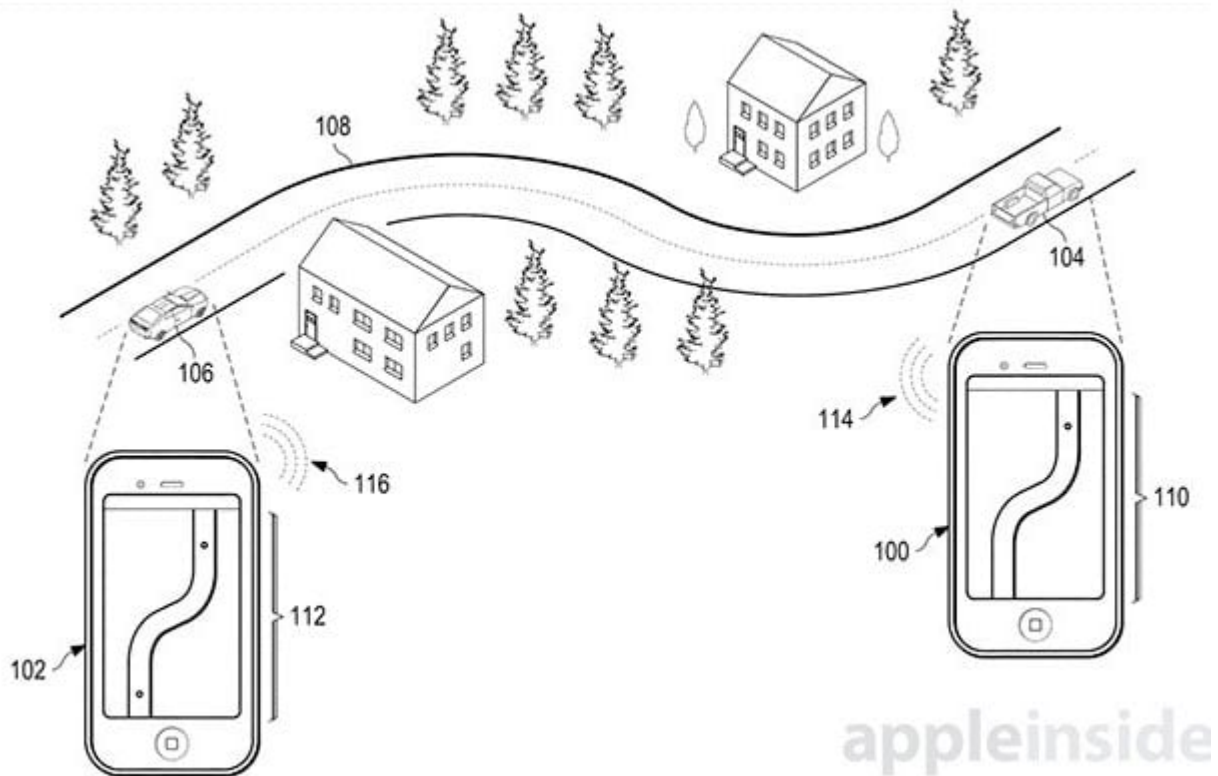
A patent granted to the company on Tuesday by the government describes a process that allows a user of a mobile device to view a visual representation of the movement of a person with another device.

"For example, someone is going for a hike or a trip and wants you to stay informed of his or her whereabouts," [CNet](#) explains. "That person would enable a feature on a mobile device to allow you to see and track in real time the path being taken on your own mobile device or computer. On the flip side, you could also share your route so the two of you can stay abreast of each other's ongoing location."

Also on the flipside, this information could be "shared" with the NSA and possibly local police. The mega-surveillance agency already has a number of tracking programs in place — such as "[Boundless Informant](#)," a tool that tracks information across the internet — and police departments are using [Stingray and Hailstorm technology](#) to track cell phone calls.

The NSA's PRISM and associated programs "can find cellphones anywhere in the world, retrace their movements and expose hidden relationships among individuals using them," former NSA employee [Edward Snowden](#) revealed in 2013. The [NSA collects, identifies, sorts and stores at least 11 different types of electronic communications](#) and works tirelessly to tweak and improve its surveillance technology.

Apple's technology will ultimately enhance this ability. For now, however, it is being sold as nifty way to stay in contact with your friends.



The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office awarded Apple U.S. Patent No. 8,989,773.

“Concerns over privacy and security always arise in any technology such as the one described here. But as Apple points out, the feature would need to be enabled by the person being tracked, so you wouldn’t be able to track people without their permission,” CNet writes.

This concern is irrelevant to the NSA and the government. They already illegally surveils GPS, cellular networks and have the ability to snoop and compromise WiFi networks (the agency can hack WiFi device from eight miles away with [Nightstand hardware](#)).

Apple, of course, is primarily interested in gaining market share by offering new and inventive technology attractive to consumers. The obvious dual use capability of Track My Friends and the ease and prevalence of NSA surveillance should however be kept in mind.

Tech pundits may champion [Apple’s decision to use a new and powerful encryption method](#) with the release of the iPhone 6, but as usual the NSA is not far behind.

As part of a [\\$79.7 million classified program](#), the agency is working on a “a cryptologically useful quantum computer” capable of breaking any kind of encryption used to protect banking, medical, business, government records and, more than likely, encryption used on personal electronic devices.

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