

# Apple's Map App to Use Drone-captured Images



Apple has received approval to conduct flight tests in the USA aimed at using images captured by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs or 'drones') to improve the quality of its Apple Maps app. The confirmation comes as part of the U.S. Transportation Department's announcement of ten projects that have been selected to help it assess how to regulate drones for commercial purposes and integrate them safely into US airspace.

The programme to find suitable local government initiatives was launched by the U.S. Transportation Department in October 2017, and attracted 149 bids in total. The Apple project is part of a partnership with North Carolina's Department of Transportation. In a statement, the company addressed privacy issues, commenting: "Apple is committed to protecting people's privacy, including processing this data to blur faces and licence plates

prior to publication."

## Emergency Response and Infrastructure Inspection

Among the other selected projects, Google's parent company Alphabet is partnering with the university Virginia Tech as Project Wing along with AT&T Inc, Intel, Airbus and Dominion Energy Inc in a pilot programme to explore emergency management, package delivery and infrastructure inspection. Meanwhile, Microsoft is among the partners for a project in the state of Kansas, and Qualcomm is involved in a winning bid from the City of San Diego to test a wide range of public safety, commercial and emergency response applications.

Some of the unsuccessful bids came from Amazon, which has been experimenting with delivery drones for some time now, and the Chinese drone manufacturer DJI. All is not lost for these companies, however, since U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao is quoted as saying that there are "no losers", indicating that many of the applicants not chosen in the initial round could still be greenlighted by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in the coming months.