

# MapQuest beta version has a cleaner, simpler look

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This website image provided by MapQuest shows the current look the company's home page MapQuest is testing a cleaner, simpler look with features that it hopes makes it easier for visitors to plan a road trip, from getting directions to figuring out where to stop along the way. (AP Photo/MapQuest)

(AP) -- MapQuest was long the leader among websites giving people online directions, but Google Maps surpassed it in 2008. MapQuest wants those eyeballs back.

Starting Tuesday, the Denver-based mapping unit of AOL Inc. is testing a fresh look with features that some might say make it look a whole lot more like - Google Maps.

The beta version scraps MapQuest's squiggly red logo in "cheap hotel" font for a simple non-serif font in shades of green and blue. Instead of scrolling down to see a map, visitors see a map right away on the right side of the screen, just like at Google Maps. There's also a single box for typing in searches instead of several.

The beta version makes it easier to ask for directions not just from point A to B, but also points C and D. Users can reorder their directional points by clicking and dragging on icons to get directions from point A to B to C, or from A to C to B.

Once a route is mapped out, a toolbar at the top of the map allows you to search for shops, parks, gas stations or other spots along the way.

"It's allowing it to be a place of discovery, rather than just a calculator," said MapQuest's general manager Christian Dwyer, who likened the new version to a "digital concierge." It's meant to be a simpler, more elegant, faster, more intuitive version that offers more information to plan a trip, Dwyer said.

If all goes well, the beta could be the default look of MapQuest in August, though users can still opt to use the older version.

True to parent company AOL's mission to provide original content to attract traffic, MapQuest's beta version links search results for particular hotel and restaurant addresses, for example, to websites or content about those addresses.

Boosting traffic is critical for AOL. AOL's revenue in the first three months of the year was down 23 percent from a year ago to \$664.3 million, while rivals Google Inc. and Yahoo Inc. reported increases.

In the online mapping category, Google Maps is the most popular with

about 63.3 million unique visitors in May, followed by MapQuest with about 49.1 million unique visitors, according to figures from comScore Inc. [Yahoo](#) Maps and Bing Maps follow.

Among the 33.5 million people looking up directions on mobile devices, MapQuest captures about 8.5 million of them, according to comScore's MobiLens service.

Part of Google's catapulting over MapQuest may be due to links to Google Maps often appearing at the top of search results for locations. In fact, a Google search for "MapQuest" pulls up a link to MapQuest.com, right next to a [map](#) of its Denver headquarters provided not by MapQuest but by [Google Maps](#).

The average MapQuest user comes to the site about twice a month, Dwyer said. He would like to see their return visits double.

"Moving the frequency needle, that would be the ultimate goal. And getting new users," Dwyer said.

**More information:** <http://www.mapquest.com>

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