

Ford, Microsoft extend partnership on Sync 3

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Ford dropped Microsoft for the operating system for its next-generation infotainment system but the long-time partnership continues with Tuesday's announcement Microsoft will provide cloud support to remotely update Ford and Lincoln vehicles.

Microsoft's Azure global cloud-based network will support Sync 3, Ford's latest infotainment system. Sync 3 will replace MyFord Touch and MyLincoln Touch starting this summer with some 2016 model vehicles. By the end of 2016 all of the automaker's vehicles in the U.S. will have switched to Sync 3 and by 2018 all vehicles globally will have the new system.

All automakers are racing to provide seamless connectivity for consumers and their devices when they are in their vehicles.

Sync 3 has a built-in Wi-Fi receiver which will allow it to accept Microsoft software updates remotely, something the current MyFord Touch system cannot do. Wireless upgrades replace updates that used to be done manually at the dealership or by the customer by inserting a patch from a USB.

For Sync 3, Ford has switched to Blackberry's QNX on-board operating system with a simpler layout, larger fonts, and a touchscreen that moves with a swipe up, down or across, with pinch-to-zoom like modern tablets. The previous MyFord Touch and MyLincoln Touch systems from Microsoft had suffered from bugs over the years which frustrated customers and dragged down quality scores for Ford's vehicles.

But Ford will continue to use Microsoft to support Sync 3 with cloud-based data updates that are sent wirelessly and seamlessly. The customer won't even know their software received an update until afterwards when they get a notification the upgrade is done, said Don Butler, Ford's executive director of connected vehicles and services. There is no need to stop the [vehicle](#) or take any action.

The news of Microsoft's continued role came out of the Microsoft Convergence conference for business users in Atlanta today.

Microsoft's Azure Cloud infrastructure is already used by many companies, said John Fikany, a vice president with Microsoft.

For Ford, it is in the testing phase now and the first software update for vehicles with Sync 3 will occur by the end of the year, Butler said.

The cloud also makes it possible to offer services such as remote start or checking the fuel gauge remotely, Butler said. Updates could include better graphics, [voice recognition](#) and eventually map updates for the navigation system.

Data generated by the vehicle is owned by the customer but is stored on Ford's secure servers, Butler said.

The original Sync was introduced in 2007 to much critical acclaim, making Ford's small cars hip and the company was seen as tech-savvy for its ability to connect a driver's smartphone with the vehicle.

The second generation three years later was dubbed MyFord Touch because the central feature was a large touchscreen for commands, in addition to using voice recognition.

In December, Ford announced Sync 3 would replace Microsoft with

Canada's QNX software from Blackberry. And it drops the MyFordTouch and MyLincolnTouch names.

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