

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2022

Chair Lina Khan
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20850

The Honorable Jonathan Kanter
Assistant Attorney General, Antitrust Division
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Chair Khan and Assistant Attorney General Kanter,

As you know, the big four technology companies—Amazon, Apple, Google, and Facebook—have more power than ever. We commend your efforts to understand their power and protect the paramount value of economic competition, along with the interests of American workers, small businesses, and consumers. We write today to call your attention to Big Tech’s creeping capture and takeover of the automobile industry. Big Tech is rapidly doing to cars what it already did to cell phones. Urgent action is needed to protect workers, privacy, and the competitive landscape.

Big Tech seeks to dominate the auto industry to pad its already massive profits.¹ It intends to accomplish its goals through two primary mechanisms: autonomous vehicles and attention. The autonomous vehicle industry could be worth trillions by the end of the decade, and Big Tech wants a piece of that pie—or even the whole pie.² However, attention may be even more valuable than autonomous vehicles. The average American spends about six hours a week behind the wheel.³ Unlike the rest of our waking hours, Big Tech does not yet control Americans’ attention while we drive in our vehicles. But the tech corporations are racing to claim our remaining attention and dominate the auto industry.

Each Big Tech giant has made significant moves to capture part of the auto market. Google played hardball to coerce many automakers into accepting their all-or-nothing Google Automotive Services package. It works with manufacturers to embed its operating system directly into vehicles as the default infotainment system, and is rapidly expanding its self-driving car subsidiary Waymo.⁴ Apple is accelerating its ambitious plans for autonomous vehicles and moving to lock out competitors from key markets and sources of data by using its digital key technology as

¹ <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/1-4-trillion-big-techs-pandemic-year-produces-mind-boggling-financial-results-11644096594>

² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-06-24/big-tech-s-car-obsession-is-all-about-taking-eyes-off-the-road>

³ *Id.*

⁴ <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/12/27/self-driving-car-big-tech-monopoly-525867>

leverage.⁵ Amazon is working with manufacturers to build its Alexa voice assistant into vehicles; it also owns significant stakes in an autonomous taxi company and an electric truck company (potential Tesla competitor Rivian), and may use either to swallow more consumer data or further pry open the auto market for itself.⁶ And while Facebook claims it is not developing an autonomous vehicle, it is likely betting on dominating the social experience in autonomous vehicles through its massive troves of behavioral data and pivoting towards virtual reality and artificial intelligence.⁷

Big Tech's looming domination of the auto industry will have profound implications for American privacy, American workers, and the entire American economy. Big Tech's abysmal record on privacy is well-known. Google's business model is based on data accumulation and privacy violations, going so far as to track users in Incognito Mode.⁸ Facebook's poor privacy record is also notorious, and just last year whistleblowers warned of massive security and data privacy risks at Amazon.⁹ The playbook by which Big Tech could abuse and misuse our data is clear: they could track our cars' location and behavior, record everything that happens in and outside of them, and sell that data to advertisers, with or without our consent. Big Tech already seeks to know and sell nearly everything about us; will our behavior inside cars also fall under their control without public discussion?

Big Tech's threat to American workers is equally grave. The auto industry is one of the last redoubts of secure, well-paid union jobs. Big Tech, on the other hand, has been no friend to labor. Amazon workers report inhumane working conditions marked by rampant surveillance and union-busting.¹⁰ Apple has faced allegations of large-scale labor violations at the gargantuan iPhone factory in Zhengzhou, China.¹¹ And Google cracked down on labor activism in its ranks by hiring an anti-union consultant.¹² Big Tech's labor record suggests that if these corporations lead the transition to autonomous vehicles or achieve dominance in the auto industry, the rights and concerted activities of American workers will be left behind.

At a time when the public is demanding aggressive antitrust enforcement, Big Tech cannot be allowed to swallow more of the American economy whole. These companies' influence elsewhere in the economy has already stifled entrepreneurship and slowed small business formation.¹³ Google, Apple, Amazon, and Facebook have repeatedly shown that they will do anything—even lose money and violate the law—to crush rivals and preserve their hegemonic

⁵ <https://promarket.org/2022/01/12/apple-digital-key-competition-privacy-contactless-payments-antitrust/>; <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-18/apple-accelerates-work-on-car-aims-for-fully-autonomous-vehicle>

⁶ <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/12/27/self-driving-car-big-tech-monopoly-525867>

⁷ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sarwantsingh/2017/09/14/is-facebook-building-an-autonomous-car/?sh=5c0278d525a0>; <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/facebook-apos-plans-auto-industry-193607630.html>

⁸ <https://www.theverge.com/2021/5/29/22460070/google-difficult-android-privacy-settings-arizona>; <https://www.theverge.com/2021/3/13/22329240/judge-rules-google-5-billion-lawsuit-tracking-chrome-incognito-privacy>

⁹ <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/antitrust/facebook-haunted-by-privacy-issues-as-ftc-boosts-antitrust-case>; <https://www.politico.eu/article/data-at-risk-amazon-security-threat/>

¹⁰ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/12/02/amazon-workplace-monitoring-unions/>

¹¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/09/09/apple-accused-worker-violations-chinese-factories-by-labor-rights-group/>

¹² <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/20/technology/Google-union-consultant.html>

¹³ <https://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2016/08/MonopolyPower-SmallBusiness.pdf>

dominance.¹⁴ The auto industry is as American as apple pie. We cannot allow Big Tech to have it and eat it, too.

We urge you to closely scrutinize Big Tech's continuing expansion in the auto industry and pursue vigorous oversight and enforcement where appropriate. Thank you for your continuing leadership in investigating and combating Big Tech's accelerating influence over our economy and society.

Respectfully,



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¹⁴ https://judiciary.house.gov/uploadedfiles/competition_in_digital_markets.pdf?utm_campaign=4493-519