

BUSINESS

# Major tech companies are coming for Zoom

**By Mike Isaac  
and Sheera Frenkel**  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

SAN FRANCISCO — As people turned in droves to video chatting app Zoom in recent weeks, the buzz caught Facebook’s attention. Inside the social network, that immediately set off a scramble.

Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook’s chief executive, ordered employees to ramp up and focus on the company’s own video chat projects, especially as use of its products also increased, said three people with knowledge of the plans, who declined to be identified because the details are confidential. On Facebook’s internal message boards, employees openly gawked at public data showing Zoom’s growing popularity, they said.

On Friday, Facebook unveiled one of its biggest expansions into videoconferencing with several new video chat features and services. They included video group chats for as many as 50 people on Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp video calls for up to eight people and video calls in Facebook Dating.

Zuckerberg is not the only tech titan with Zoom on his mind. Google this month made its video chat app, Meet, more accessible through Gmail. Cisco recently promoted its Webex teleconferencing service as highly secure compared with Zoom. And Verizon announced last week that it was acquiring BlueJeans Network, a videoconferencing service.

Tech and telecommunications giants are mobilizing against Zoom as the Silicon Valley company has become one of the biggest tech beneficiaries of the coronavirus outbreak. Over the past month, downloads of Zoom have increased 740 percent, according to App Annie, an analytics firm. Zoom has said it now has more than 300 million daily participants, up from 10 million before the pandemic.

Facebook, Google and others want a piece of that success. Behind the scenes, people with knowledge of the companies said, employees are sore that they have not grabbed more of the same buzz as Zoom, especially because many of the giants have offered their own video chat software — like Google Meet — for years.

In targeting Zoom, the tech behemoths are following a playbook of deploying their vast resources to outmuscle a smaller, fast-rising competitor. Last year, Facebook and Google trained their sights on TikTok, the Chinese-made video app, which had become a hit with young audiences. Often, the largest companies have opened up their wallets and snapped up tiny rivals to eliminate them as competition.

In an interview, Zuckerberg chafed at comparisons to Zoom and said video chat was just beginning to be a larger phenomenon as people aimed to digitally connect in more intimate ways.

“The world was already trending in this direction before COVID-19,” Zuckerberg said while using the new Facebook Messenger video product. “This is the trend in general — the ability to feel more present, even when you’re not physically together.”

Zoom’s chief executive, Eric Yuan, said in an interview this month that his company was not thinking about competition and was focused on users and their experience during a “once in a probably 100 years crisis.”

Zoom, founded in 2011 by

Yuan, a former Cisco executive, was designed to be easy to use and install. Unlike other video chat products, the app also has a popular grid view that lets people see everyone on a call at once, creating a more social atmosphere. The company, based in San Jose, Calif., went public last year.

When the spread of COVID-19 turbocharged the video chat phenomenon, Zoom emerged as a clear front-runner, owing largely to word-of-mouth about its ease and simplicity. It has been the most downloaded app in Apple’s App Store for more than a month. The company is valued at around \$47 billion, more than Slack and Pinterest.

But its success has been bumpy, with scrutiny falling on Zoom’s lack of security and privacy practices. Zoombombing — intentionally disrupting other people’s Zoom sessions with pornography or other forms of digital harassment — has grown so pervasive that the term has become a part of mainstream discourse.

Bigger tech and telecom companies are racing to catch up, even though they were earlier to roll out videoconferencing services. Cisco acquired Webex in 2007 for \$3.2 billion. Facebook has long hyped its own video chat offerings. Microsoft bought internet calling service Skype in 2011 for \$8.5 billion.

This month, Google said it would plug Meet directly into Gmail so users could take video calls inside their email browser window. Google also is mimicking Zoom, releasing a grid-style view for Meet and adding features to improve video quality in low-light conditions. On Wednesday, Google added a noise-cancellation option for video calls and expanded the advanced features to all of its customers for free.

Google said Meet use was up more than 25 times what it was in January, with more than 2 million new user sign-ups every day.

After questions arose about Zoom’s privacy and security, competitors also rushed to assure customers that their offerings were safer. Javed Khan, a Cisco vice president, said that not only had use of Webex skyrocketed — at one point, the company added 240,000 new users in 24 hours — but so had its security business.

“As the largest enterprise security company in the world, we’re helping our customers connect and collaborate, securely,” he said.

Few companies have been as attuned to Zoom’s rise as Facebook.

Zuckerberg recently galvanized several Facebook teams to accelerate their video chat product releases, including a desktop app for Facebook Messenger — which has a video chat feature front and center — this month. More than 700 million people now make calls across Messenger and WhatsApp each day, Zuckerberg said, making it clear that other features needed to be built in as soon as possible.

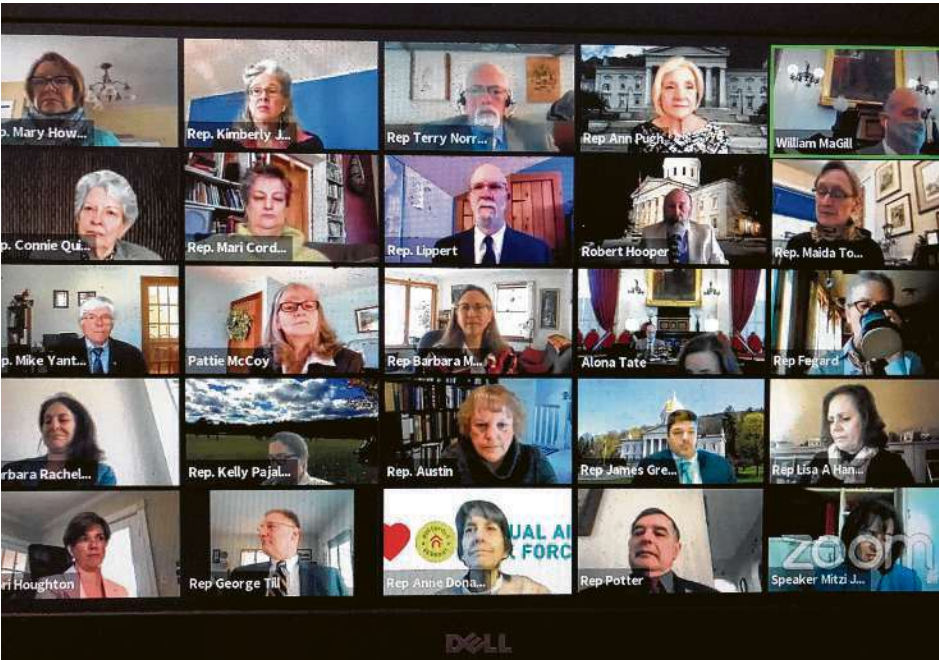
Those include Messenger Rooms, a way to quickly create video chat rooms using Facebook Messenger that can support dozens of people simultaneously. Facebook also integrated video chat into its Dating product and plans to bring the ability to create Rooms to WhatsApp, Instagram Direct and other services.

Zuckerberg said Zoom felt more scheduled and a little less casual than Messenger Rooms. He said he wanted to make the video chat experience more ser-

endipitous.

“I don’t really think there’s anything today that you can display on an ad hoc basis that you’re hanging out and have whoever wants to join you over video,” he said. “Sometimes people compare what we do to other companies, like you did earlier with Zoom. I think the main thrust of how people are going to experience Rooms will be very different.”

Facebook’s augmented and virtual reality division, which offers a video communications device called Portal, has also been working with Zoom since January on a partnership so people could make Zoom video calls on the gadget, according to three people with knowledge of the company’s plans.



Wilson Ring / Associated Press

**With people's social lives moved indefinitely online, tech companies want to unseat Zoom from its perch as the default for meetings.**



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**BIDS & PROPOSALS**

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**The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas (METRO) is planning to issue the procurement documents listed in this advertisement. IFB No. 4020000117: Quad Gates @ UH Entrance #6-Equipment.** Solicitation will be available on or about 04/27/2020  
**RFP No. 4020000051: Audit Tracking Software.** Solicitation will be available on or about 04/28/2020.  
Prospective bidders/proposers can view and download these solicitations by visiting METRO's website at <https://www.ridemetroapp.org/procurement/>. If you are unable to download the documents or are having difficulty, please contact METRO Plan and Bid Room at (713) 739-4881.

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Sealed bids will be received by IDEA Public Schools on or before 5 PM on May 8th, 2020 for: Fuel Card Program. Response forms and specs can be viewed at <https://ideapublicschools.org/contact-us>

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Recently, Walmart identified an error involving letters and refund checks that were sent to certain Walmart patients. The error caused refund checks to be sent to an incorrect address. As a result, customer refund mailings were delivered to another individual receiving the same type of refund mailing.

Information appearing incorrectly in the letter includes a customer: (1) name, (2) a refund amount, and (3) a refund check. It is important to note that no Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers, financial information, insurance information, or prescription names were disclosed, and no electronic information of any kind was affected.

These letters were sent on or around January 5th, 2020. Walmart realized the error on January 15th, 2020, and immediately began looking in to the matter. Walmart is also reviewing policies and procedures to prevent this error from occurring again. Although the company does not anticipate any harm to patients and has no indication the information was misused, out of an abundance of caution, Walmart is notifying any customers who may have been affected.

While Walmart does not take this lightly, it is important to note that the information that was disclosed is highly unlikely to lead to any fraudulent activity by those who received the letter.

Affected patients are encouraged to call 1- 877- 266- 1670 for assistance and advice regarding how this incident may have affected them. In addition, patients should always be vigilant when reviewing explanations of benefits and other information pertaining to health care. Patients should also be cautious about request to provide any personal or financial information over the phone, by text, or by email and verify the sources of any such requests.

Walmart places great value in their customers' trust and takes this matter very seriously. The company is fully committed to protecting the privacy and security of customers' personal information.

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, HOUSTON DIVISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF INGRAM BARGE COMPANY, AS OWNER AND OPERATOR OF THE BARGES IB1021, IB921, IB1927, IB1985, IB9123, IB1954, IB1960, PETITIONING FOR EXONERATION FROM AND/OR LIMITATION OF LIABILITY**

**CIVIL ACTION NO. 4:20-cv-00983, JUDGE GEORGE C. HANKS**

**NOTICE OF ACTION BROUGHT FOR EXONERATION FROM AND/OR LIMITATION OF LIABILITY**

NOTICE is hereby given that Limitation Petitioner, Ingram Barge Company ("Ingram"), as owner/operator of the IB1021, IB921, IB1927, IB1985, IB9123, IB1954, and IB1960 (the "Vessels"), has filed a Complaint pursuant to 46 U.S.C. §§ 30501 et seq., claiming the right to exoneration from and/or limitation of liability for damage claims, demands, or liens arising out of any incident related to an incident occurring on or about September 19, 2019 while fleeted on the San Jacinto River near Harris County, Texas.

All persons asserting claims with respect to which the Verified Complaint seeks exoneration from or limitation of liability are advised and admonished to file their respective claims with the Clerk of the Court for the United States District Court, Southern District of Texas, Houston Division, 515 Rusk Street, Houston, Texas 77002, and to serve on the attorney for Limitation Petitioner, Michael A. Golemi of Liskow & Lewis APLC, 1001 Fannin, Suite 1800, Houston, Texas 77002, a copy thereof on or before the 22nd day of May, 2020, or be forever defaulted. Personal attendance is not required.

Any claimant desiring to contest either the right to exoneration from and/or the right to limitation of liability shall file and serve an answer, all as required by Rule F of the Supplemental Rules for Certain Admiralty and Maritime Claims contained in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

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**RFP #20-0101 CDBG-MIT**

The Sabine River Authority of Texas plans to apply for the upcoming Community Development Block Grant Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) funding from the General Land Office. These services are being solicited to assist the District in its application and administration of the CDBG-MIT contract(s), if awarded, the Authority is seeking to contract with a qualified Grant Administration Service Provider (individual/firm) to prepare the application and/or administer the awarded contract(s). Copies of the RFP may be located on the Authority's website at <https://www.sratx.org/about/doing-business>. Please submit five (5) copies of your proposal of services and a statement of qualifications for the proposed services to the address below: Attn: Purchasing, Sabine River Authority of Texas, P.O. Box 579, Orange, TX 77631. Proposals shall be received by the District no later than 2:00 p.m. on the 5th day of May 2020 to be considered. The Authority reserves the right to negotiate with any and all individuals or firms that submit proposals. Section 3 Residents and Business Concerns, Minority Business Enterprises, Small Business Enterprises, Women Business Enterprises, and labor surplus firms are encouraged to submit proposals. The Sabine River Authority of Texas is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

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