

expensive to deploy, they are expensive to maintain and they only cover a limited area of roadway," said Alexandre Bayen, the assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering who ran the experiment.

The new phone system, like the FasTrak transponder-based system now in use, raises serious issues of privacy, said Lauren Weinstein, founder of the Woodland Hills-based Privacy Forum.

"I'm not saying you shouldn't do something like this, I'm saying people need to be informed about what's done with the data," Weinstein said, "You need to ask if it's being collected and how long is it going to be archived."

Some motorists have been suspicious of how they might be tracked with FasTrak tags, suspicions that were confirmed last June when records requested by MediaNews showed that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission released electronic toll payers' bridge crossing records in civil court proceedings.

"This same technology," Weinstein warned, "with nothing but a policy decision, could be used in the same way as red light cameras."

Bayen agreed that privacy is paramount, saying that the new system would scramble the actual identification numbers of cell phones and once a vehicle's progress was recorded, that bit of information would be discarded.

"From a privacy standpoint, the less information given, the better," he said. "Cell phone users will have the option to turn off the service if they don't want to use it or they don't want their data sent."

Even so, Weinstein said users of the system need to be informed that a judge's

order could well force the purveyors of the traffic information to alter those protections and start collecting more specific data on wireless users.

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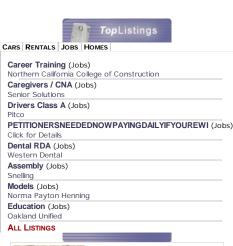
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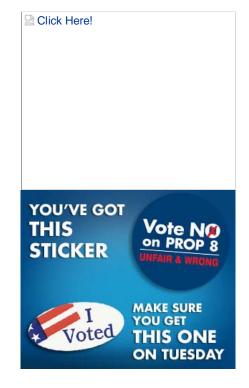
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