Nokia and UC Berkeley researchers have developed a technology that would help drivers to navigate through traffic jammed roads and offer online road condition information.

To test the capability of the new technology, researchers made 100 cars run from the University of California, traveling a 10-mile stretch of highway near San Francisco. All the cars were equipped with GPS-enabled Nokia N95.

The experiment was carried out to test the traffic data collection and aggregation system, at the same time they also studied the trade-offs between data accuracy, personal privacy, and data collection costs.

The software aggregating the GPS feeds disassociates data stored in the individual’s device and combines it with the general stream of traffic data. Privacy is achieved by keeping the data anonymous and aggregated. Also it is protected by banking-grade encryption.
“Mobile device users control the service. If an individual does not want their device to transmit position data they turn off the feed from their GPS,” stated Quinn Jacobson, Research Leader at Nokia Research Center, Palo Alto.

The researchers feel that even lesser than 5 percent of drivers need to contribute location data for the system to be helpful on any particular road.