



Nokia trials N95 as traffic monitor



Damian Koh | Feb 11, 2008

What impact does it have on you? None, for now. But the potential of a recent field test in Union City, California, could be far-reaching. The experiment involved 100 UC Berkeley students who drove a 10-mile stretch of freeway using cars issued with a GPS-enabled N95, Bluetooth headset and special traffic-monitoring software. "As the students drove the freeway, the phone sent data about each car's speed and position back to the company's research facility," wrote Erica Ogg from News.com who was on the ground.



Of what use is this to the average commuter? Lots. Traffic patterns can be monitored and also relayed to them via their cell phones even before they set off on their journey. So instead of relying on a fixed sensor infrastructure, the traffic data system makes use of a collective effort similar to how Wiki operates: Everyone contributes.

That said, this concept isn't the first of its kind. For example, Vodafone and TomTom in October 2006 collaborated to create a commercial traffic data system using the signals between cell phones and base stations to monitor real-time traffic conditions. The difference is Nokia's experiment makes use of a ubiquitous device, the cell phone.

There are pressing issues such as privacy, but if these concerns are addressed and eliminated, the collective system could be a much cheaper way to monitor traffic. For now, the Finnish phone-maker is looking to increase the number of participants for the trials and include more realistic test environments.

Although I don't think such a system will take flight in the immediate future because there aren't that many GPS-enabled handsets in the market (external Bluetooth GPS units aside), if the project gains traction, it could be something really useful for commuters. Another alternative that can be explored is using cell phone location data (something which is already collected by base stations) to provide a locality-based information, so commuters know which areas to avoid. But, for now, it's all great ideas waiting to go someplace.

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wils Wong says...

Works for open spaces...N95 just take too long to triangulate in Singapore.

Feb 11, 2008 20:58

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damiankoh says...

Have you installed the software upgrade to bring A-GPS to the N95? Based on my experiences, it cuts down the time needed for a lock-on significantly.. You should be able to get a GPS fix between 15 to 30 seconds..

Feb 11, 2008 22:05

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