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Thursday, November 9, 2006

The Web on wheels: Rhode Island firm brings the Internet to the automobile



Does your teenager go through withdrawal from Youtube.com and MySpace.com during long car trips? Well, a Rhode Island company may have the answer.

[KVH Industries Inc.](#), of Middletown, R.I., recently launched



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TracNet, a system that allows passengers to access the Internet on a vehicle's video screens; the system also turns the entire vehicle into a wireless hot spot, so passengers with laptops can go online.

While TracNet is still very new, KVH spokesman Chris Watson said there has been interest from owners of recreational vehicles and boats, and he cited research by J.D. Power and Associates, which found that more than half of full-size sport utility vehicles, 40 percent of luxury SUVs, and 40 percent of minivans now come with video screens.

"Once a video screen shows up, people have a preference for live content," Watson said.

The current price is \$1,995 for the automotive version of TracNet. The system operates on Verizon Wireless' high-speed network, which costs another \$60 to \$80 a month. There is also a \$10 monthly charge for MSN TV, the service from Microsoft Corp. that brings the Internet to TV screens.

An MSN TV portal provides access to e-mail, instant messaging, weather maps, chat rooms, news and other features, the company said.

While Web sites outside of the portal are fully accessible, most are not formatted correctly for TV screens and may not look quite right, even though the content is all there. Another limitation is the system's dependence on the Verizon network: where there is no cell phone service, there won't be any Internet access either. (AP)

Posted by Boston Globe Business Team at [09:51 AM](#)

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