# Testing broadband on buses for efficiency

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Traveling by bus can be notoriously unreliable, even in a country like Japan, where the public transportation system prides itself on efficiency and predictability. So buses have taken a back seat to trains in Japan, where railways are more or less punctual to the minute, with only rare exceptions.

Still, technology may well make bus rides less stressful, if it doesn't succeed in eliminating the challenges of traffic congestion, accidents and bad weather.

Tokyo-based ROOT -- Real Object Oriented Technologies -- said earlier this week that it will start testing a mobile router system that will allow users broadband access even when moving at around 130 miles per hour. The company will install its RTMR2400 network onto 10 buses traveling around the Fukuoka area in southern Japan. Named the Fitbus, given the fact it's based in Fukuoka as an information-technology experiment, the project will take place from Feb. 15 until March 31.

While riders themselves will not be able to use their own personal computers to test the router's abilities, each network-equipped bus will have a screen to allow customers to see how exactly their ride is progressing, whether there are any problems or delays up ahead, and it will also provide advertising and other information as well. Meanwhile, those waiting for their ride at bus stops will be able to monitor how the bus they are about to take is doing on the road.

So while the system cannot prevent accidents or delays, at least people

both on the bus and those waiting for the vehicle to arrive will know when exactly their rides will arrive, and know what is causing the delays.

The project is run in conjunction with the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology, a government agency, as well as a number of private companies including West Japan Railways in addition to several academic institutions such as the University of Kyushu.

The ultimate objective of the experiment is to allow individual riders of public transport to be able to access high-speed Internet seamlessly while on the go. In addition, ROOT stated that its system has been "seen with great importance amid concerns about the security of public transportation systems," adding that such a network would be useful under emergency circumstances like natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons, both of which are all too common in Japan.

ROOT has been selling its router to the general public since the beginning of this month.