

WiFi hitting the road with Avis

January 2 2007

WiFi is hitting the road through U.S. car rental giant Avis, which signed an agreement with Autonet to provide wireless Internet access to travelers.

For \$10.95 a day, Avis will issue motorists a device that plugs into a car's power supply and delivers a high-speed Internet connection, The New York Times said Tuesday. A mobile WiFi hotspot linking laptops and other electronic devices to the Internet without wires represents a critical move toward what technology experts call the "connected car."

Sterling Pratz, president and chief executive of Autonet, said the device uses the 3G cellular network. He said it would work in all major metropolitan areas and in about 95 percent of the country.

The technology minimized dropped connections but did not eliminate them, Pratz said.

Legal and safety questions about operating a vehicle with a WiFi hotspot onboard are also likely to be raised, industry analysts said, because the technology could divert people's attention from the road and the act of driving.

Autonet said the service was for passengers, not drivers and that Avis would require renters to agree not to hold it liable for accidents resulting from irresponsible use.

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Citation: WiFi hitting the road with Avis (2007, January 2) retrieved 10 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-01-wifi-road-avis.html>

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