The Sydney Morning Herald
01 February 2008

Instant traffic updates let you dodge traffic jams

By Adam Turner

Sat-nav might get you from A to B, but the SUNA traffic channel lets you avoid the traffic along the way.

Sydney's F3 traffic chaos provided the perfect opportunity this week for Intelematics Australia to spruik the merits of its SUNA Traffic Channel, an implementation of the TMC (Traffic Message Channel) standard. SUNA works by monitoring the traffic light control systems to identify traffic congestion, assisted by "probe vehicles" deployed in known congested areas. In other words, someone gets paid to sit in traffic jams so you don't have to - there's a contender for world's worst job.

Anyway, all this data is then transmitted to compatible in-car sat-nav systems via FM radio, warning drivers of what lies ahead. The service is already live in Melbourne and is coming to Sydney and Brisbane mid-year. Having tested a few sat-nav systems, I'd say the SUNA Traffic Channel sounds like a must-have.

While in-car systems are designed to show you the "quickest" or "shortest" route to a destination, they don't take into consideration the time of day and the traffic conditions. For example, motorists should avoid schools at all costs around 3pm, but your average sat-nav system will happily drive you into traffic chaos if a school or two happens to lie between you and your destination. This forces you to use common sense and ignore your electronic copilot, which kind of defeats the purpose.

You can't expect the SUNA Traffic Channel to monitor the traffic conditions in every suburban back street, but it's certainly a step in the right direction. Along with the ability to read street names aloud, I'd say SUNA is a must-have when choosing a sat-nav companion to ride shotgun as you make your way across town. What other features would you like to see included in the next generation of in-car sat-nav devices?

http://blogs.smh.com.au/gadgetsonthego/archives/2008/02/instant_traffic_updates_let_yo.html

BLACKIE McDONALD