



# WARREN'S Washington Internet Daily

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## Today's News

**WI-FI ONBOARD MORE** public transportation in the next few years, experts expect. Boston's commuter rail gets connected. Amtrak plans deployment. (P. 1)

**PUBLIC HEALTH GRID COMPUTING** gets closer to reality. (P. 2)

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## Wi-Fi Coming to More Transit Systems, Experts Forecast

More public transportation providers are expected to add free or low-cost Wi-Fi, experts said in interviews. National carriers like Amtrak have already set deployment plans. Local carriers like the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority are eyeing revenue growth with the recent Wi-Fi deployment on commuter rails in Boston.

As the economy sours and as "we all become more ecological or green," one of the trends seen on both coasts is the growth in ridership of trains, both commuter and long-haul, said VoIP blogger and Comunicano CEO Andy Abramson. The goal of adding connectivity for carriers like Amtrak is to retain riders as well as to meet the needs for the increasing number of business travelers, he said. Apparently Amtrak agreed. It's conducting trials on an Acela Express train to identify solutions that would work in a high-speed train environment, which isn't a simple endeavor, a spokeswoman told us. Once a viable solution is developed, Amtrak plans to make Wi-Fi available to Acela Express passengers in a year, she said. The cost of the service is unknown, said Amtrak, which has already contracted with T-Mobile to offer wireless in five stations along the Northeast corridor: New York, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Del., Baltimore, and Washington, D.C.

MBTA saw free Wi-Fi as a revenue booster. While MBTA finances are tight, it expects adding free Wi-Fi on its commuter rails to be, in a worst case scenario, revenue neutral, and best case, to boost revenue, a spokesman said. MBTA recently started Wi-Fi deployment on its commuter rails. The rollout, to be completed this year, will include free Wi-Fi on 258 commuter rail coaches, MBTA said. By spring 2009, at least two coaches per train on all 13 lines will be Wi-Fi ready. MBTA even hinted future connections on every transportation entity in the state: "MBTA may consider looking into the feasibility of adding other modes," the spokesman said. When considering a Zone 8 pass costs \$250 per month, and the annual cost of the Wi-Fi service to be \$266,194, the MBTA needs only attract slightly over 100 new riders, the spokesman said, saying it's a win-win for the authority and the passengers. The total deployment cost is \$1,122,968, including \$785,300 hardware cost and \$337,668 installation cost, he said.

Wireless service is also available on other commuter systems. Wi-Fi on the bus began in 2004, when Mountain Metropolitan Transit in Colorado Springs offered Wi-Fi on buses. Similar service is now available in cities like San Francisco, Reno, Nev., Austin, Texas, and Seattle, said the American Public Transportation Association.

More Wi-Fi is also a win for service providers like AT&T. The MBTA project is a great opportunity for AT&T, said AT&T Vice President and General Manager for the New England Market Steve Krom. The expansion to the North side of the commuter rail network moved the company closer to providing thousands of transit customers across Southeastern Massachusetts with mobile internet access on their daily commute, he said.

Equipment vendors want the business too. WAAV, a Wi-Fi router vendor, is working with several large transportation carriers and wireless providers, founder J.C. Fulknier told us. He expects more Wi-Fi on public transportation during a tough economy because the service is a new revenue stream and could be a competitive differentiator, he said. Most of the service would be free because the goal for the carriers is to boost ticket sales, he forecast. WAAV offered MBTA the AirBox X2 dual connection cellular router, with a 7.2 Mbps downlink and 1.8 Mbps uplink and the traffic balanced over two connections for increased bandwidth, Fulknier said. WAAV is also offering Wi-Fi equipment to other mass transit providers including Bolt Bus, Greyhound, Washington Deluxe and LimoLiner. But not all efforts to put Wi-Fi onboard succeed. In the Bay Area, plans to add Wi-Fi to CalTrain never left the train station.

Usage and offerings in other countries keep expanding. Starting in March, Japanese operator NTT will offer Wi-Fi throughout cars on the new N700-type trains that offer fast rail link between Tokyo and Osaka, the company said. The service is an extension of NTT's HotSpot service and will be charged at the standard HotSpot rate, which costs \$5.73 per day or \$19.25 a month. In the U.K., the number of passengers using free Wi-Fi on the National Express East Coast railway tripled during the first month of free service, the carrier said. European carrier Thalys even plans to offer video on demand this year after it completes its broadband rollout on its Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne routes, using satellite and cellular combined backhaul, the company said.

Security is always a concern for public Wi-Fi, several analysts said. Like other Wi-Fi HotSpots, the MBTA service doesn't have security protections, WAAV's Fulknier said. It's unlikely that MBTA will install security software in the future, he said. Additionally, users may experience "a brief disruption in signal strength as the service is based on cellular signals," the MBTA spokesman said. Meanwhile, content filtering is a common practice. MBTA, following other cities, will put optional content filtering onto the network, saying it helps prevent users from visiting inappropriate websites in public places. The city of Nashville used OpenDNS as filtering solution for free Wi-Fi. Salt Lake City filtered Wi-Fi on its public buses. -- *Yu-Ting Wang*

### BioSense Allows Resource Allocation

## **Information Feeds Public Health, But Sharing Remains Challenge, Officials Say**

While much energy and attention has been focused on getting the Nationwide Health Information Network up and running so patients' health information is always fingertips away, no matter where the patient might be, a quieter, parallel effort has been taking place in the public health arena. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been working on a number of initiatives designed to improve surveillance and ultimately improve

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public health. The effort faces many of the same challenges, like interoperability and standards, of the NHIN, but also must deal with federal-state relations and the question of control.

One of the major challenges within the public health domain has been the existence of some 70,000 independent systems, each of which focuses on collecting and analyzing data for its particular area of interest, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis or lead poisoning, said Dr. Tom Savel, program lead for the Grid Initiative at the CDC. While the clinical health world can concentrate on the electronic medical record as common ground, there's no EMR equivalent in public health, he said. Instead, public health needs a common platform on which data can move freely, facilitating the exchange of information and knowledge, he said.

The National Center for Public Health Informatics at the CDC has zeroed in on grid computing to achieve that flow of information, Savel said. The traditional take on grid computing is that it muscled up computational power, in high-performance physics, for example; for public health, though, grid computing is about data exchange and data processing, he said. The heart of grid computing is that it's "a secure and very powerful already-built infrastructure," he said. "Already-built" being key to most public health officials, who ultimately shouldn't have to know about the infrastructure, just what it can do.

What Savel sees the infrastructure doing is allowing the public health community to access and build upon each other's ideas. Instead of public health departments in Louisiana and Texas each getting funding to build the same system for use in-house, he said, each could build the component that suits their strengths and needs. If a public health department in Texas, for example, comes across a great analytics tool on the grid, the department can use it, download the open-source code to modify the tool for its needs, and then could choose to share the modified tool on the grid, he said. The nuances of need for information among the regions of the country should mean never-ending variations on such tools. Natural language processing, for example, takes written text, locates particular words, like "heart attack," then labels it with the corresponding code, he said. Eventually, the grid will host multiple natural language processing tools, he said, each with its own flavor -- pathology, cardiology and so on.

The public health grid has been in the research phase for about a year, with CDC working with academic partners to figure out how it can work in the public health field. "That incubation time seems to be coming to an end," Savel said. He thinks early adopters could begin using it later this year, though he confesses to protectiveness of his "baby" and worries that too early of a rollout could set the idea up for failure, as has happened before. And there are other issues to be dealt with. Having a common grid doesn't solve the problem of a common vocabulary. There should be a discovery service that shows public health officials what's out there for them to use, he said. Authorized users would need a digital certificate to access the grid -- not such a problem when only five research centers are working on it, but trickier to manage when state and local public health departments start to use it. "Some entity has to keep track of all those certificates," he said. Further, the grid infrastructure has been Linux-based thus far, but lots of public health departments work on Windows, he said. Savel said the team's been working on creating virtual machines, so a public health official could install a CD that would create a mini-terminal that would run Linux and the grid. They're also working to allow people to use Windows, with the ultimate goal of creating a Web portal accessible to any type of system.

The team led by CDC is working to make the grid lightweight, free and powerful, Savel said. Public health needs a system that's easy, fast and robust, he said. And though the model is decentralized, there will need to be oversight at some point. That could be a governance committee composed of members of the community, or perhaps a policy committee and a technical committee, he said.

The grid is just one of the computing challenges the CDC is working on. Lynn Gibbs-Scharf, the NCPHI division director in charge of the Public Health Information Network, said the PHIN is a network of people working to increase the capacity of public health at all levels. It focuses on people, processes such as

developing requirements for public health data exchange, and tools, she said. Gibbs-Scharf said the CDC began building tools several years ago because products to meet the states' needs didn't exist. Slowly vendors are beginning to offer systems, she said, though they're at varying levels of maturity. But the electronic exchange of information is showing its value: after Hurricane Katrina, for instance, displaced school children could register for school in other cities and states because their vaccination records were stored in Louisiana's immunization network, she said.

Most of what the CDC works on is about the states building capacity, not necessarily the CDC collecting data, Gibbs-Scharf said. There are a few systems that collect data, however, and BioSense, a biosurveillance system that took some hits in a November GAO report, is one. Dr. Leslie Lenert, the NCPHI director, found the report unfair, not least because BioSense "never really was designed for the states in the first place." The system was originally designed to support the federal government -- to help the government decide how to allocate resources or respond to a pandemic, and based on those criteria it's very useful, Lenert said. But based on feedback it's been modified to enhance regional collaboration, he said.

The system redesign also attempted to address unease about the federal role. Originally, BioSense was to collect all data centrally. But that posed an infrastructure problem for the CDC as well as a political problem -- states and local governments didn't necessarily want to hand over their data. "They think they should be doing the primary surveillance in their states," Lenert said. So the design was changed to a distributed architecture, and states now offer summary-level data and retain individual data in their original locations. The distributed approach comes very close in effectiveness to having all the data in one place, and in fact "probably is more effective because we can get more people to play under these circumstances," he said.

BioSense currently captures data on about 12 percent of emergency room visits, or 100,000 transactions each day, Lenert said. Eventually BioSense will be part of the grid computing system, he said. -- *Leslie Cantu*

## Agencies

The National Motor Vehicle Title Information System, in the works since legislation passed in 1992, went online Friday. The system allows state motor vehicle administrators to exchange title information. Consumers can check title information through third-party fee-for-service sites. So far, 37 states are participating or in development, a Justice spokeswoman said. For consumers, the service offered is similar to that offered by existing companies like Carfax. Two entities were offering the service Friday: in a quick check of a VIN for a vehicle registered in the District of Columbia, the CARCO Group found information on the vehicle but Auto Data Direct said it couldn't find the VIN. Justice said the system will help consumers, law enforcement and state titling agencies.

## Courts

The Electronic Frontier Foundation is seeking a breather in lawsuits it's filed to force action on Freedom of Information Act requests. EFF filed a motion Thursday for a stay in proceedings in the case *EFF v. Department of Justice*, filed in 2006 to seek disclosure of records from the FBI's Investigative Data Warehouse. It's the first of such motions EFF will likely file for all or most of its FOIA cases. EFF wants to hold off on proceedings until there are new attorney general guidelines on FOIA based on President Barack Obama's Jan. 21 memo ordering a "presumption of disclosure." Continuing litigation in the interim "would be wasteful of judicial resources," EFF said. The motion also asks the court to direct Justice to file a report within 30 days of the new guidelines "stating whether, and to what extent, the new guidelines alter the government's position with respect to the material at issue in this litigation." The department's response is due Feb. 12.

## International

Canada's Office of the Privacy Commissioner released guidelines on companies' responsibilities for customers' personal data under the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act. The act says companies are responsible for protecting data they outsource to other companies for processing. A company should protect this information through a contract, the guidelines said. "The organization must take all reasonable steps to protect it from unauthorized uses and disclosures while it is in the hands of the third party processor," they said. The third party should have policies and processes in place to protect data, and the primary organization should audit and inspect how the third party handles personal information, the guidelines said. They also warn that Canadian law doesn't supersede local law, so "the result may well be that some transfers are unwise because of the uncertain nature of the foreign regime or that in some cases information is so sensitive that it should not be sent to any foreign jurisdiction."

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With about 50,000 Astra2Connect subscribers in 11 European countries, SES Astra and its U.K. partner Eurosat, are rolling out service to Great Britain, officials said. Eurosat and Astra estimate that at least 100,000 and probably up to 800,000 homes in the U.K. are in 1,300 "notspots" -- areas where there's no hope of broadband by phone or cable because homes are too far from a telephone exchange or are using old, poor quality phone lines. "We are only selling to people who can only get dial-up," said Mike Locke, who works on special projects for Eurosat. Data packages range from 256 kbps to 2 Mbps, with monthly rental from \$29 to \$109 after purchase of the dish and receiver modem kit for \$434.50. Eurosat charges about \$145 for installation, but do-it-yourself is possible. Astra2Connect has no data caps, but fair-use policies stop the few users who are downloading large files such as movies at peak hours in the evenings or over weekends, said Mike Chandler, Astra U.K. managing director. Astra plans a VoIP service "later this year" to bring voice calls to parts of Europe which can't get a phone line and where there's no cellphone service. -- **BF**

## Industry Notes

Verizon was to begin offering Verizon Hub in more than 2,500 stores across the country, effective Sunday, the carrier said. Available at \$199.99 after a \$50 mail-in rebate with a two-year contract, the first VoIP home system puts a communications command center in the home that bridges wireline and wireless connectivity and runs on any broadband connection, regardless of service providers. Additional cordless handsets, which can be used throughout the home, will be available for \$79.99 each. For customers without wireless routers, Verizon will offer one for \$69.99.

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Nortel discontinued its mobile WiMAX business and ended its joint agreement with equipment vendor Alvarion, the company said. The move, which will have no impact on Nortel's other offerings, will allow Nortel to narrow its focus and better prepare for "long-term competitiveness," it said. The Canadian vendor will work closely with Alvarion to transition its WiMAX customers.

## Internet People

FTC Bureau of Consumer Protection Deputy Director **Mary Beth Richards** will leave the agency to return to the FCC; **Mary Engle** moves up to acting deputy director... New board members at Minority Media & Telecom Council: **Deborah Tate**, ex-FCC; **Maurita Coley**, Davis Wright Tremaine... **Amy Levine**, former House Commerce Committee telecom counsel under Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., becomes Telecom Subcommittee counsel... **Eric Cooney**, ex Tandberg, becomes president, CEO and board member at Internap, effective March 16, succeeding **James DeBlasio**.

# Washington Internet Daily Calendar

- Feb. 4 SANS Institute webcast “What Can We Learn From the Web Attacks of 2008,” 1 p.m. -- [www.sans.org/webcasts/show.php?webcastid=92228](http://www.sans.org/webcasts/show.php?webcastid=92228)
- Feb. 5 Pike and Fisher webinar on opportunities and risks in the new gTLD space, 2 p.m. -- [www.pf.com/eventDetail.asp?id=91&type=1](http://www.pf.com/eventDetail.asp?id=91&type=1)
- Feb. 10 AEI role of broadband in stimulus talk, 2:15 p.m., 1150 17th St. NW, Washington -- [www.aei.org/event1881](http://www.aei.org/event1881)
- Feb. 10-11 SocComm social communications summit with Jeff Pulver, 3LD Art and Technology Center, New York City -- [www.soccomm.com](http://www.soccomm.com)
- Feb. 11 Future of Music Coalition Policy Day, 9 a.m., 1145 17th St. NW, Washington -- [www.futureofmusic.org/events/dcpolicyday09/index.cfm](http://www.futureofmusic.org/events/dcpolicyday09/index.cfm)
- Feb. 11 ComScore 4Q financials, 5 p.m. -- [www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=2688](http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=2688)
- Feb. 12 Multi State Information Sharing and Analysis Center and Department of Homeland Security National Cyber Security Division webcast on data security, 2 p.m. -- [www.msisac.org/webcast](http://www.msisac.org/webcast)
- Feb. 16-19 Black Hat cyber security conference, Hyatt Regency Crystal City, 2799 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Va. -- [www.blackhat.com/html/bh-dc-09/bh-dc-09-main.html](http://www.blackhat.com/html/bh-dc-09/bh-dc-09-main.html)
- Feb. 16-19 GSMA Mobile World Congress, Barcelona, Spain -- [www.mobileworldcongress.com](http://www.mobileworldcongress.com)
- Feb. 24 Information Technology Association of America CIO survey event, 8:30 a.m., 1300 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington -- [www.itaa.org/events/registersec.cfm?EventID=2815](http://www.itaa.org/events/registersec.cfm?EventID=2815)



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