

On a Souped-Up Jitney, the Folks Roam and Roll

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The two-hour trip from Manhattan to the far reaches of Long Island may pass more quickly for laptop-toting passengers of the Hampton Jitney, now that the coach service has added a wireless Internet connection on four of its buses.

The system, called Wi-RAN - for wireless rolling area network - by its developers, uses a small computer that feeds a Wi-Fi signal to passengers and relays data to the Internet over a high-speed AT&T Wireless cellular data network.

The speed of the Internet connection is typically above 100 kilobits per second, according to Craig Plunkett, whose company, CEDX, is a partner in Wi-RAN. The Jitney coaches travel along highways and roads with upgraded cellphone networks.

Service costs \$8 per trip or \$40 per month for unlimited access, with fees collected

through a Web page accessible on the bus. The service has been operating for about three weeks.

Wi-RAN's other developer is Best Mobile Computing, which previously created a Palm hand-held system for Hampton Jitney that processes credit cards and tracks data about customer pickups and dropoffs.

David Mankoff, vice president for business at Hampton Jitney, said that while the Wi-RAN service was in the testing phase, "our intent is to equip our entire fleet of 35 motor coaches."

"The prime comment that I get from this, he added, is " 'Wow, that's a really great idea,' and, 'Wow, now I'll really never be able to not work.' " Glenn Fleishman

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