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## It's Like a Couch on Wheels

### Albuquerque Demo Spotlights In-Car Satellite TV Service

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While a 100-mile-per-gallon car remains elusive, live national and local TV reception from a moving vehicle isn't.

The TracVision A7 Mobile Satellite TV System, from DIRECTV and KLH Industries, was demonstrated Wednesday in Albuquerque by product spokesman Bob Ochsner.

He had a Cadillac Escalade fitted with small TV screens in headrests facing the rear passengers and a large screen mounted in the back of the vehicle for tailgate parties.

"Our market is families who take road trips with kids, soccer moms and sports enthusiasts," he said. "New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and Arizona are especially good markets because people drive farther."

And because people are spending more time in their vehicles for regular commuting, business and vacations, "they want to stay connected on the road with live content," he said. "They want to mix business with pleasure."

The idea of passengers watching their favorite TV shows in real time while being driven down the road is an offshoot of the recreational vehicle and marine markets, where a standard satellite dish is used to pick up TV signals from a stationary boat or RV.

The new technology uses a round, low-profile antenna that mounts to the roof of a car or standard roof rack. Beneath the antenna cover is a Global Positioning System with flat panels that rotate and pivot to track a satellite as the car moves. The signal is sent to a DIRECTV receiver box inside the vehicle.

A hand-held remote control comes with the TracVision A7 system, which sells for about \$3,000. Installation can range from \$200 to \$400.

DIRECTV home customers will pay an additional \$4.99 a month for car service, or \$44.95 for car service alone.

The system is designed to be used with vehicles that already have passenger TV screens integrated into seatbacks, headrests or mounted overhead. Aftermarket installation of monitors can range from \$350 to more than \$2,000, depending on size and quality, according to local dealers.

In Albuquerque, the TracVision A7 system can be purchased at Audio Express, Paradise Village, Accessories Unlimited and the Ferrari Customizing Shop.

Local distributors say the TracVision A7 system is too new to gauge its popularity. Some report sales averaging one a month, others report a few during the year. Customers have mostly been installing them in full-size SUVs, motor homes, fifth-wheel trailers and long-haul semi-truck cabs.

If this sounds like niche marketing, consider that an industry survey conducted by the market research firm of Frost & Sullivan indicated that 20 million vehicles will be equipped with passenger entertainment video screens by 2011, Ochsner said.

Many cars already have dashboard-mounted monitors for the driver to operate navigation or audio systems. The TracVision TV system can be wired to those, Ochsner said, but New Mexico is among 30 states where it is illegal for drivers to watch video screens while driving. Consequently, the TracVision system automatically disengages the video signal from any screen visible to the driver when the vehicle is shifted into drive or reverse, he said.

Like any satellite system, the TracVision antenna must have relatively clear line-of-sight alignment to pick up a signal from a satellite, Ochsner said. Mountains, buildings, thick stands of trees, overpasses and other obstacles can block the signal.