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Smart traffic forecast offers seven-day predictions

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A traffic forecasting system capable of predicting traffic conditions seven days in advance will go live to the public in California on Wednesday.

Alongside the weather forecast, viewers of KXTV News 10 in Sacramento can now get 3D animations of their local road network, showing not only where the gridlock is but also where it is likely to be.

The system, called Beat-the-Traffic, is the first public traffic forecasting system that combines real-time traffic density and speed with historical trends on major routes.

“Congestion depends upon on recurring work and errand habits,” says Andre Gueziec, president and CEO of Triangle Software in Campbell, California, which developed the software.

The level of congestion depends largely on the time of day and day of week, and often patterns are repeated through the seasons. “With the proper tools, you can predict quite a bit of this,” he says. But the system can also use past data on the effect of accidents to predict what will happen after a new one occurs.

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The system takes real-time sensor information from major routes and junctions as its inputs. In addition to this it uses alerts on traffic related weather conditions, road incident alerts, road works and even some calendar events such as sporting events, in order to make its predictions.

You can see a Triangle Software animation illustrating the system [here](#) (Mpg format).

In the coming months the company is planning to roll the system out to 19 major cities in the US, including San Francisco, Los Angeles and Atlanta. In time, Gueziec hopes, traffic forecasts will become a staple feature of TV, much like weather forecasts.

He believes that drivers facing increasingly long commutes will demand such information. Paul Watters of the UK’s Automobile Association Motoring Trust, agrees. But, he says, like weather forecasts they are likely to be viewed with suspicion by drivers, even if they are occasionally right.

All it takes is one unplanned incident, like an overturned truck, to throw things into chaos and leave drivers distrustful of the system, Watters warns.

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