

For Surfers, a Roving Hot Spot That Shares

By Johanna Jainchill
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When the Sunningdale Country Club in Scarsdale, N.Y., opened its gates last week to a location shoot for "The Sopranos," a new fixture was on display in the mobile dressing rooms - a roving [Wi-Fi](#) hot spot.

With a device called the Junxion Box, the production company can set up a mobile multiuser Internet connection anywhere it gets cellphone service. The box, about the size of a shoebox cover, uses a cellular modem card from a wireless phone carrier to create a Wi-Fi hot spot that lets dozens of people connect to the Internet.

The staff members of "The Sopranos," squeezed into two trailer dressing rooms, needed only the Junxion Box and their laptops to exchange messages and documents with the production offices at Silvercup Studios in Queens.



Behind Henry J. Bronchtein, co-executive producer of "The Sopranos," is a Junxion Box.

"We used to fax everything," said Henry J. Bronchtein, the show's co-executive producer. "The paper would jam; it was messy. This is much more reliable."

Junxion Boxes have also been spotted on [Google's](#) commuter buses for employees and along Willie Nelson's latest tour. But what may be a boon for wandering Web surfers could quickly become a threat to wireless providers.

"The premise is one person buys an air card and one person uses the service, not an entire neighborhood," said Jeffrey Nelson, executive director for corporate communications at [Verizon](#) Wireless. "Giving things away for free doesn't work anymore. It never did."

Unlimited service on cellular modem cards for PC's costs about \$80 a month. The carriers are clearly worried about a technology that could destroy that business, but they have not formed a united front against Junxion.

The makers of the Junxion Box, based in Seattle, seem eager to head off any battle by forming partnerships with the wireless companies.

"We're not trying to build a radar detector," said John Daly, 42, co-founder of Junxion Inc. and vice president for business development. "We believe we're creating an opportunity for the carriers. It may not be entirely comfortable for them right now, but we hope we can get to a point where we can collaborate with them."

The Junxion Box was created by Mr. Daly and two partners, David Hsiao, 38, the company's

president, and Peter Polson, 31, vice president for product development. The commercial version of the box retails for \$699. They plan a less expensive consumer version next year.

John Kampfe, director of media and industry analyst relations for Cingular Wireless, said the Junxion Box was being evaluated and certified by Cingular and could eventually be sold in conjunction with Cingular's wireless service for wide-area networks.

"There is a whole pricing model that has to take place with the Junxion Box," Mr. Kampfe said.

So far Junxion has about 200 customers, many of whom are testing the product. The company went around the wireless companies by making Trio Teknologies, a wireless services reseller, its exclusive distributor.

Peter Schneider, a partner at Gotham Sound, the communications equipment company in New York that supplied Junxion Boxes to the sets of both "The Sopranos" and the rapper 50 Cent's upcoming movie, "Get Rich or Die Tryin'," said his customers would not be interested in wireless

modem cards were it not for the possibility to share the connection through the Junxion Box.



"That's the exact appeal of it" for his customers, he said. "That you can rent it to a group. As word gets out, it will become part of the communication equipment they rent."

But for carriers like Verizon Wireless, which spent \$1 billion on its broadband network, it is difficult to let users piggyback on that service. "We're not surprised that people are building services like this and trying to attach them to our network," Mr. Nelson of Verizon said. "It verifies how cool and how important our network is. We're going to protect that investment."

The device acts as a portable Wi-Fi hot spot.

That may prove to be an uphill battle as new technologies like Junxion alter the wireless carriers' control over the use of their networks.

"That's just something they have got to live with because that's the technology now," said David Anderson, Willie Nelson's tour manager of 31 years. "Most people wouldn't or couldn't afford to have that many cards. They weren't going to get 22 customers, but now they got 6."

There are two Junxion Boxes in each of the two tour buses and each has three wireless modem cards so they can switch to the cellular provider network with the best local coverage. It allows Mr. Nelson, whom Mr. Anderson describes as a computer geek, to check his e-mail and surf the Web while on the road.

"The Junxion Box is good for going down the highway," Mr. Anderson said from Hillsboro, Tex., where Mr. Nelson was performing earlier this month. "It was frustrating in the older days. It's finally the way it should be."