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The Magellan RoadMate 1430

The electronic mobile device revolution is now placing GPS receivers into cell phones and just about every other portable device that has a communication function. If your goal is to use a GPS unit in your vehicle to help you find your way from location A to location B a single purpose unit is still probably your best bet. Today's portable units, such as the Magellan (photo 1) RoadMate, 1430, provide the accuracy and the ease of use as the astronomically priced factory installed units. Their one weakness is a greater vulnerability to theft if they are visible in a parked car. Their greatest weakness is also their greatest strength which is how easily you can take them with you to use away from your home vehicle.

The Magellan RoadMate 1430 performed its primary task of providing a driver with point to point directions straight out of the box. It includes a 4.3 inch color touch screen, street by street detailed maps of the United States and Canada, 6 million points of interest (POI's), a speech synthesizer that says the street names and highway names of impending turns, QuickSpell for entering addresses, an SD card slot, and a live traffic option feature that can help you avoid road delays. Magellan lists the live traffic coverage areas on its website at: http://www.magellangps.com/products/traffic_service.asp#traffic.

To take advantage of the RoadMate's traffic option you need to subscribe to the service. Magellan provides a coupon for 3 months of free service. To acquire this service you will need to go online, register your unit, and redeem this coupon. If

you find this to be a worthwhile feature you will need to pay a yearly \$40.00 subscription fee to continue the service after the 3 month free service expires. The goal of the live traffic option (you select the operational mode) is to provide you with either a warning of impending traffic delays or an automatic re-routing of your travel route around the jam.



The 12 volt power adapter supplied with the Magellan RoadMate 1430 has one wire to power the unit and a second wire that serves as the unit's FM traffic antenna.

Since the unit doesn't have a built in FM traffic antenna you can only use the traffic feature when the unit is plugged into its 12 volt power adapter.

I found the need to plug in the unit to use the traffic feature annoying since the RoadMate has a Lithium-ion rechargeable battery that can power the unit without plugging it in for up to 3 hours. Since most testing took place in a rental car, in California, on drives under an hour, the RoadMate was usually running on battery power; so the effectiveness of the traffic option wasn't effectively tested.

The RoadMate also has a route exclusion feature that lets you select roads that you want to avoid. To activate this feature you click to show the maneuver list (see photo 2) which lists all the turns and other maneuvers you will need to perform to get to

your destination. To exclude a road from your route you click on it in the listing and then press exclude. The RoadMate will then re-route your trip avoiding all excluded roads. The detour feature calls for less planning than the road exclusion feature. During your trip you can click this feature to tell the RoadMate you want to avoid the next 3, 5, or 10 miles of the currently planned route.

In conclusion the RoadMate turned on quickly and seemed to instantly find the satellites necessary for it to plan your route and provide turn by turn directions. Its touch screen and programming were outstanding. My wish list for improvements would only include a built in FM antenna for live traffic even if you don't plug in the unit and a better system of notification if it suddenly doesn't have sight of enough satellites to provide turn by turn directions. It now just jumps to the maneuver list to keep you on track until it once again has access to enough satellites. This maneuver on the part of the unit gives a false impression that the unit

has frozen and you need to press its reset button. Magellan RoadMate 1430 lists for \$399.99 but in these competitive tight budget times you can already find it online for as low as \$189.99 at www.dell.com.

Dr. Alan J. Pierce is co-author of Introduction to Technology Glencoe McGraw-Hill 2010 and a TechDirections Magazine Columnist. Visit www.technologytoday.us for past columns and resources.