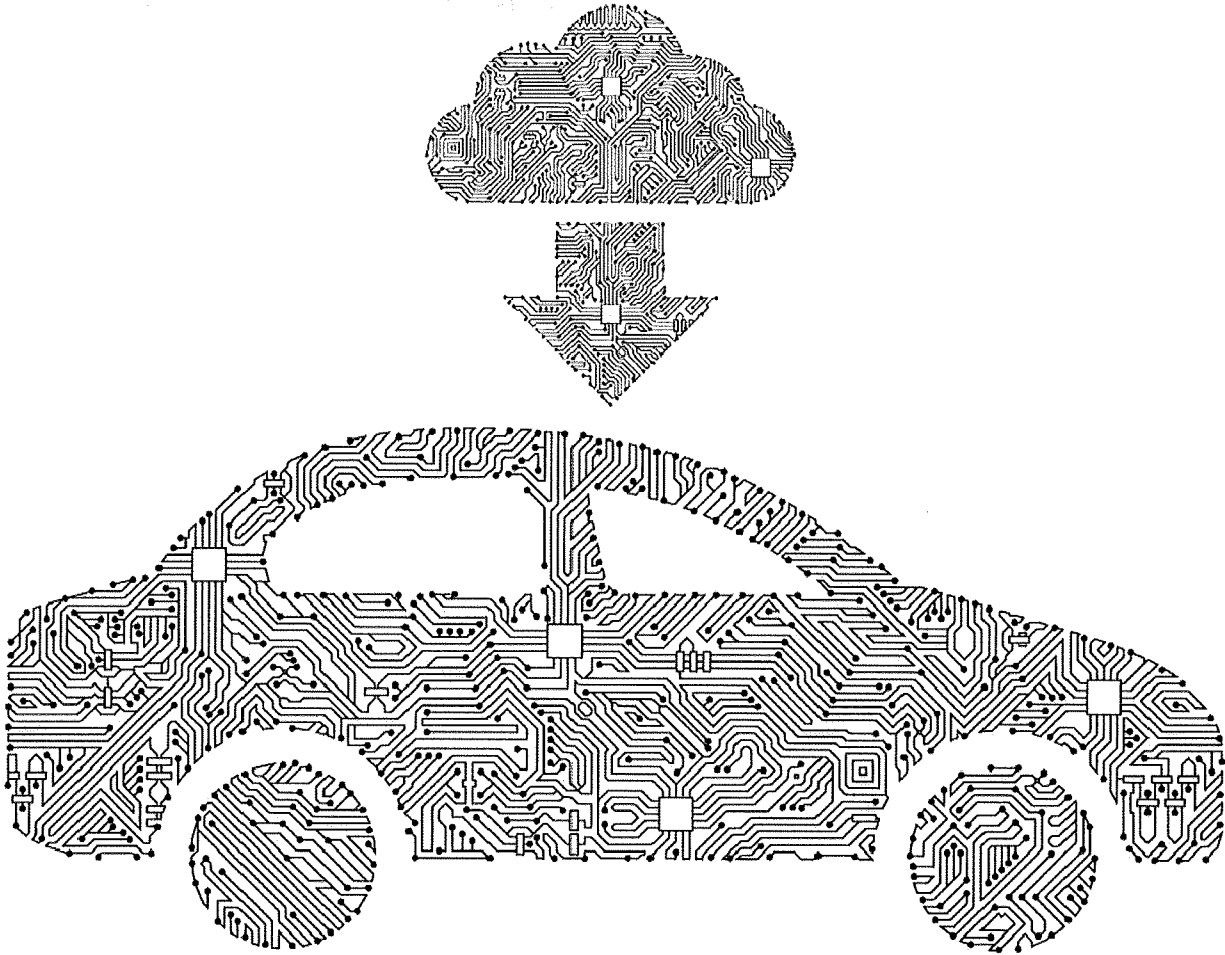


# TELEMATICS



## VEHICLE TELEMATICS IN THE AUTO CARE INDUSTRY

*The Picture is Both Clear and Muddy*

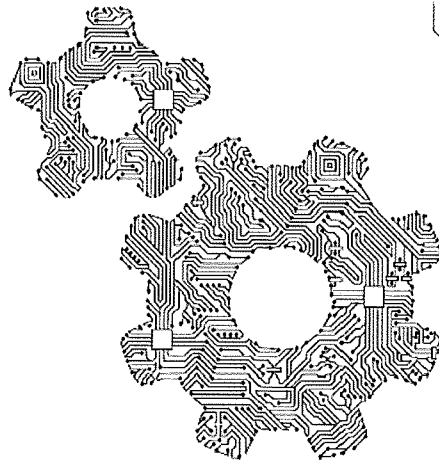
FEW topics draw more attention than vehicle telematics and the impact of embedded communication systems on the future of the auto care industry. Vehicle manufacturers are appealing to the desire for connectivity and convenience by introducing technology that beams content into the vehicle, such as traffic, entertainment and parking

information. The same technology is used to extract information from the vehicle such as location, speed, air bag status and diagnostic data. The network is naturally closed and very secure, favoring communication with the OEM and their dealer network. This amounts to the vehicle manufacturers being “online” with their product while the independent auto

care industry is “offline.” The playing field for service and maintenance opportunities is no longer level.

In the short term, technology innovators have developed a variety of connectivity solutions that either plug into the OBDII port or make use of smart phone technology – or both. This interface with the vehicle enables remote diagnostics and other

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vehicle management services. The cost of this technology is coming down and cellular data plans for vehicles are quite affordable. But the industry is still sorting out the business model because, regardless of the cost, charging the consumer anything to receive diagnostics and maintenance reminders is a tough sell.

In the near future we can expect to see a growing number of OE-sponsored Software Developers Kits. Ford and GM, among others, are inviting developers to create smart phone Apps that interact with the vehicle network. Since the car companies have the last word on what applications get approved to work with their vehicles, it is unlikely that an app that directs diagnostic information to an aftermarket service

provider will make it into production.

That leaves our best hope for the long-term future in a standards-setting initiative called the Vehicle Station Gateway (VSG). This technical solution was first proposed to an ISO (International Standards Organization) workgroup as a part of the Intelligent Transportation Systems network (ITS). The gateway is essentially a standardized layer of software that would manage communication between any authorized party and the on-vehicle network. The current VSG proposal includes provisions for security, authentication, communication traffic management and data standardization. Most importantly, the VSG proposal calls for non-discriminatory access to the vehicle network.

The vehicles of tomorrow will be the subject of connectivity with multiple roadside audiences. Of course the auto care industry is interested in vehicle operations data and diagnostics; the Intelligent Transportation System is interested in location, speed and other safety

parameters; the insurance companies are interested in acceleration, braking and hours of operation; California will be interested in compliance with emission regulations; and the list goes on.

The case for a single, standardized Vehicle Station Gateway is driven by a lower cost and ease of deployment versus multiple network interfaces. On-board safety and security is actually enhanced by focusing all efforts on a single solution. And, as a public policy matter, it will become impossible for the vehicle manufacturers to discriminate over who can access the vehicle network. Ultimately, Telematics will become a “consumers’ right to choose” issue. The Auto Care Association will continue to advocate for an open technical solution and the rights of the motoring consumer. ■