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Launch Of Booster With 3 GLONASS Satellites From Baikonur Postponed

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MOSCOW-- The date of launch of a Proton-K booster rocket with three GLONASS global positioning system satellites from the Baikonur cosmodrome has been pushed back to a reserve date of October 26, Baikonur cosmodrome officials told Itar-Tass on Wednesday.

"The decision to delay the launch is not related to technical causes," the official said, "on October 25, Kazakhstan celebrates a national holiday -- Day of Republic." "The launch has been postponed until October 26. The time of launch is 11:35, Moscow time," he added, Kazinform cites Itar-Tass.

GPS Units With More to Say

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The New York Times

Manufacturers of **global positioning system** receivers have seen the future, and it has little to do with maps. "Most people know where they are going," said Julie Ask, a wireless analyst for Jupiter Research. "They spend 95 percent of their time driving around their towns. What do you add on so people use GPS driving around their hometowns? Directions just aren't enough."

One answer from manufacturers is "dynamic content," a fancy way of saying that future GPS units will get up-to-the-minute information by Wi-Fi or a cellphone data service. That means drivers will be warned of traffic slowdowns as they happen and can get detailed information about "points of interest" -- not just where to find a gas station, but which has the cheapest fuel. The most advanced attempt at dynamic content is currently being made by Dash Navigation, whose portable GPS device not only receives **positioning** signals from satellites, but also collects driving speed and road data from cars that use it and anonymously report this information to a database.

That data would let Dash know the actual speed at which traffic travels at different times of the day, so that it could route cars more effectively than current systems can. The Dash will be available in the first quarter of 2008. But for the Dash to build the database, it needs many drivers to buy the things and use them.

That does not deter Alain de Taeye, chief executive of Tele Atlas, a top distributor of map data. His company has a \$2.7 billion buyout offer from TomTom, the largest GPS business in Europe. "The holy grail of digital mapping is you cover the whole world, and the maps are up to date and error free, which is utopia but not that crazy," he said, adding that this goal is attainable with enough GPS units involved.

The purchase is being scrutinized by officials in the Netherlands, where TomTom and Tele Atlas are based, over possible monopoly concerns, but Mr. De Taeye said that excluding other GPS makers from using Tele Atlas would destroy the advantage of having as many devices reporting as possible.

Nelson Chan, the chief executive of Magellan, another GPS maker, agrees that the units need real-time data, not for mapping but to provide other timely information. Rather than just finding a parking garage nearby, future units could find the least expensive one with available spaces, he said.

Garmin, which also makes GPS units, sees a future in sharing data but not necessarily in real time, for now. It is currently betting on customization. It sells software that enables companies and individuals to create their own points of interest, information that can then be downloaded on their GPS devices. For instance, runners and bikers who use Garmin's recreational units often load maps of their exercise routes to share with others.

Although manufacturers want to keep the cost of their devices down, there will probably be an extra subscription fee -- most likely expensive -- to receive real-time information. As Ms. Ask said, "I think we are still a few years away from that being really affordable to everyone."