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Big Brother Looking Over Your Shoulder as You Travel — Cameron on Transportation

Author : David Gurliacci

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Don't look now, but someone is joining your travels: Big Brother.

You assume you're alone, traveling in your car to and from work, but you are actually being watched. All along Interstate 95, there are TV cameras are looking for accidents and slowdowns.

Though there are specific state laws prohibiting the use of those cameras to write speeding tickets, they can follow your car by model, color and license plate number.

Many local police cruisers have license plate readers, scanning every plate and sending its information to a national database that can alert the officer of outstanding warrants, lack of insurance and other stoppable offenses. Some departments store their scan data for weeks, others for years.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) is now working with a private company to access a billion license plate records, allowing the agency to know where you were and when.

If you have an E-ZPass, it's being "pinged" for more than just paying tolls. The New York City Department of Transportation uses hundreds of E-ZPass readers in Manhattan, it says, to monitor the flow of traffic. But the New York Civil Liberties Union calls that an invasion of privacy.

Cellphones are also constantly transmitting our location and speed to services like Google and Waze, though you can turn that off. It's even alleged that hackers can use Waze to track you. And have you checked your Google Location History lately to see everywhere you've been and when?

Even outside of your car, you're still being followed. Metro-North just added security cameras to its trains, watching both the engineer and the passengers. There are also cameras at stations and on New York City buses. MTA and the NYPD can easily track every swipe of your MetroCard (tied to your credit card). Of course, they're only looking for bad guys, not you. Right?

Traveling by air? Well, in addition to a full luggage search and body pat-down by the TSA, the airlines and U.S. Customs agency are now using facial recognition to allow you to board your flight and leave the country.

If you're bound for Aruba on JetBlue out of Boston, you won't even need a boarding pass as your face will identify you to the airline — and who knows who else. The whole process takes two or three seconds and is billed as a "convenience."

U.S. Customs hopes to use facial recognition for arrivals into this country starting in the summer. In the meantime, your RFID chip-enabled passport will be necessary. But do you know what information about you is encoded in that chip? U.S. Customs says there is no personal data on the chip, just a reference number corresponding to your personal information stored on their computers.

Like all RFID chips, the one in your passport can be "pinged" from up to 30 feet away, so some travelers are now shielding their passports with expensive wallets lined with metal.

Don't want Big Brother to join you on your journeys? Wear a disguise, strip yourself of all technology, and try walking or riding a bike. Or just stay home, curled up in a paranoid-induced ball, worrying about Big Brother.

See also:

- [Don't Blame Gov for Transport Project Delays, Blame the Legislature: Cameron on](#)

- [Transportation](#) (Feb. 7)
- [State Transportation Chief Describes Service Cuts, Rail Fare Hikes Coming Soon Unless Alternate Funding Found](#) (Jan. 26)
- [AAA Poll: Plurality of CT Drivers, But Not a Majority, Say Tolls Are Best Way to Finance Transportation](#) (Jan. 23)
- [CT's Prospects Get Ever Darker for Transport Funding, Even for Maintenance and Plowing: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Jan. 2)
- [Predictions for Roads, Rails and Air Transport in 2018: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Jan. 21)
- [How My Transportation Predictions for 2017 Worked Out: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Jan. 7)

Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for 25 years. He is the founder of the Commuter Action Group and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column are only his own. You can reach him at CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com

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