The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A communication module for use with a vehicle, comprising:

a processor interfaced to a local wireless module configured for communication via a local channel with one or more other communication modules and a wide-area wireless module configured for communication via a wide-area channel with a traffic monitoring server,

wherein the communication module is selectively configurable to operate in at least a first mode corresponding to a master communication module and a second mode corresponding to a slave communication module, and wherein the processor is configured to determine that the communication module is to operate in the first mode or the second mode,

wherein when operating in the first mode the communication module is configured to:

identify and maintain communication with one or more other slave communication modules located within a predetermined range of the communication module via the local channel;

generate vehicle group telemetry data corresponding to telemetry data of the vehicle associated with the communication module; and

communicate said vehicle group telemetry data to the traffic monitoring server via the wide-area channel,

and wherein when operating in the second mode the communication module is configured to:

identify and maintain communication with another master communication module located within a predetermined range of the communication module via the local channel.

2. A communication module as claimed in claim 1, wherein the local channel implements the 802.11p standard.

3. A communication module as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 2, wherein the wide-area channel comprises at least one of: GSM, UMTS, CDMA, HSPA+, Mobile WiMAX, LTE, and/or comprises a V2I standard.

4. A communication module as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the communication module is configured to operate in the first mode in response to a failure to identify another master communication module.

5. A communication module as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the communication module is configured to operate in the second mode in response to successfully identifying another master communication module.

6. A communication module as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the communication module is configured to operate in the first mode after operation in the second mode in response to:

either a failure in communication with the other communication module or a change in the conditions; and

a failure to identify another communication module configured as a master.

7. A communication module as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the vehicle group telemetry data is communicated to the traffic monitoring server periodically.

8. A communication module as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 7, configured to send and receive heartbeat messages via the local channel.

9. A communication module as claimed in claim 8, wherein the other master communication module is identified due to reception of a heartbeat message sent by the other master communication module.

10. A method for configuring and operating a communication module as a master communication module, comprising the steps of:

determining, as a result of communication via a local channel, that a predefined local communication criteria has not been satisfied;

configuring the communication module to operate in a first mode corresponding to a master communication module;

identifying and maintaining communication with one or more slave communication modules located within a predetermined range of the communication module via the local channel;

generating vehicle group telemetry data corresponding to telemetry data associated with the communication module.

11. A method for operating a communication module comprising a processor interfaced to a local wireless module configured for communication via a local channel with one or more other communication modules and a wide-area wireless module configured for communication via a wide-area channel with a traffic monitoring server, the method comprising:

determining, as a result of communication via a local channel, whether a predefined local communication criteria has or has not been satisfied;

in response to determining that the predefined local communication criteria has not been satisfied:

operating the communication module in a first mode corresponding to a master communication module;

identifying and maintaining communication with one or more slave communication modules located within a predetermined range of the communication module via the local channel;

generating vehicle group telemetry data corresponding to telemetry data associated with the communication module; and

communicating said vehicle group telemetry data to the traffic monitoring server via the wide-area channel,

and in response to determining that the predefined local communication criteria has been satisfied:

identifying and maintaining communication with another master communication module located within a predetermined range of the communication module via the local channel.

12. A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein the local channel implements the 802.11p standard.

13. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 12, wherein the wide-area channel comprises at least one of: GSM, UMTS, CDMA, HSPA+, Mobile WiMAX, LTE, and/or comprises a V2I standard.

14. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 13, wherein the communication module operates in the first mode in response to a failure to identify another master communication module.

15. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 14, wherein the communication module operates in the second mode in response to successfully identifying another master communication module.

16. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 15, including the step of, in response to: either a failure in communication with the other communication module or a change in the conditions; and a failure to identify another communication module configured as a master, operating the communication module in the first mode after operation in the second mode.

17. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 16, wherein the vehicle group telemetry data corresponds to vehicle telemetry data of a vehicle associated with the communication module.

18. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 17, including the step of periodically communicating the vehicle group telemetry data to the traffic monitoring server.

19. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 18, including the step of periodically communicating heartbeat messages over the local communication module when operating in the first mode.

20. A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein the other master communication module is identified due to reception of a heartbeat message sent by the other master communication module.

21. A vehicle communication system comprising one or more vehicle groups, wherein each vehicle group comprises at least one vehicle comprising a communication module, wherein the or each communication module is configured for communication via a local channel with other communication modules, and wherein each communication module is selectively configured for operation in one of a first

mode and a second mode, wherein the first mode corresponds to its vehicle configured as a master and the second mode corresponds to its vehicle configured as a slave,

wherein each vehicle group comprises one vehicle configured as a master,

and wherein for each vehicle group the vehicle configured as a master is configured to generate and communicate vehicle group telemetry data to a traffic monitoring server via a wide area channel, wherein the vehicle group telemetry data corresponds to vehicle telemetry data of the vehicle associated with the communication module configured as a master.

22. A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein at least one vehicle group comprises at least one vehicle configured as a slave.

23. A system as claimed in claim 22, wherein vehicles configured as a slave are configured to communicate via the local channel with the vehicle configured as a master for the vehicle group to which it belongs.

24. A system as claimed in either one of claims 22 and 23, wherein the vehicle group telemetry data generated and communicated by a master of a vehicle group is indicative of at least one of: position, heading direction, and speed of the vehicle(s) configured as a master of the, or each, vehicle group.

25. A system as claimed in any one of claims 21 to 24, wherein the communication module of each vehicle is a communication module according to any one of claims 1 to 9.

26. A method for adding a first vehicle to a vehicle group,

said vehicle group comprising a second vehicle configured as a master and at least one or more additional vehicles each configured as a slave, wherein each vehicle is configured for communication with other vehicles via a local channel, the method comprising the steps of:

the first vehicle determining, as a result of communication via the local channel, that a predefined local communication criteria has been satisfied, said predefined local communication criteria indicating that the first vehicle is suitable for joining the vehicle group;

in response, configuring the first vehicle to maintain communication with the second vehicle via the local channel; and

registering with the second vehicle a slave configuration of the first vehicle, said slave configuration indicating that the first vehicle has been added as a member of the vehicle group and is configured as a slave,

wherein the second vehicle is configured to generate vehicle group telemetry data corresponding to telemetry data of the second vehicle and to communicate said vehicle group telemetry data to a traffic monitoring server via a wide-area channel.

27. A method as claimed in claim 26, wherein each vehicle comprises a communication module according to any one of claims 1 to 9.

28. A method for removing a first vehicle configured as a slave from a vehicle group,

said vehicle group comprising a second vehicle configured as a master and optionally one or more additional vehicles each configured as a slave, wherein each vehicle is configured for communication with other vehicles via a local channel, the method comprising the steps of:

the second vehicle determining that a leave event has occurred, said leave event indicative that the first vehicle is to be removed from the vehicle group;

in response, de-registering with the second vehicle the membership of the first vehicle from the vehicle group,

wherein the second vehicle is configured to generate vehicle group telemetry data corresponding to telemetry data of the second vehicle and to communicate said vehicle group telemetry data to a traffic monitoring server via a wide-area channel.

29. A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein each vehicle comprises a communication module according to any one of claims 1 to 19.

30. A method as claimed in any one of claims 28 to 29, wherein the leave event comprises the second vehicle determining that the first vehicle is unable to communicate via the local channel with the second vehicle.

31. A method as claimed in claim 30, wherein the second vehicle is configured to wait a predetermined time from a previous communication being received from the first vehicle via the local channel before determining that the leave event has occurred.

32. A method as claimed in any one of claims 28 to 29, wherein the leave event comprises the first vehicle communicating via the local channel to the second vehicle a request for removal from the vehicle group.

33. A method as claimed in any one of claims 28 to 29, wherein the leave event comprises the first vehicle communicating via the local channel to the second vehicle information inconsistent with membership of the vehicle group.

34. A method for configuring a first vehicle as a master of a vehicle group, wherein said first vehicle is a member of the vehicle group and is originally configured as a slave,

said vehicle group comprising the first vehicle configured as a slave, a second vehicle configured as a master, and optionally one or more additional vehicles each configured as a slave, the method comprising the steps of:

the first vehicle determining that a master leave event has occurred, said master leave event corresponding to the second vehicle leaving the vehicle group; and

in response, configuring the first vehicle as a master of the vehicle group,

wherein, when configured as a master, the first vehicle is configured to generate vehicle group telemetry data corresponding to telemetry data of the first vehicle and to communicate said vehicle group telemetry data to a traffic monitoring server via a wide-area channel.

35. A method as claimed in claim 34, wherein each vehicle comprises a communication module according to any one of claims 1 to 9.

36. A method as claimed in any one of claims 34 to 35, wherein the master leave event comprises the second vehicle communicating to the first vehicle, via the local channel, a messaging indicating it is leaving the vehicle group.

37. A method as claimed in any one of claims 34 to 35, wherein the master leave event comprises the first vehicle determining that the second vehicle is unable to

communicate via the local channel with the first vehicle.

38. A method as claimed in claim 37, wherein the first vehicle is configured to wait a predetermined time from a previous communication being received from the second vehicle via the local channel before determining that the leave event has occurred.

39. A method as claimed in any one of claims 34 to 38, wherein the vehicle group comprises at least one additional vehicle configured as a slave, the method further comprising:

one or more additional vehicles determining that a master leave event has occurred;

the one or more additional vehicles communicating with the first vehicle via the local channel; and

thereby determining that the first vehicle is to become the master of the vehicle group and the one or more additional vehicles remaining as slaves of the vehicle group.

40. A method as claimed in claim 39, wherein the first vehicle is determined to become the master of the vehicle group on account of having an earliest initial membership time when compared to the initial membership times of the one or more additional vehicles,

wherein an initial membership time corresponds to a timestamp indicating the time at which the associated vehicle became a member of the vehicle group.

41. A method for merging a first vehicle group comprising a first vehicle configured as a master and a second vehicle group comprising a second vehicle configured as a master and at least one additional vehicle configured as a slave, the method comprising the steps of:

the first vehicle communicating with the second vehicle via a local channel;

determining, as a result of the communication, that a merge condition is satisfied meaning that the second vehicle group is to be merged with the first vehicle group;

configuring the second vehicle as a slave of the first vehicle group;

configuring each additional vehicle as a slave of the first vehicle group,

wherein , when configured as a master, the first vehicle is configured to generate vehicle group telemetry data corresponding to telemetry data of the first vehicle and to

communicate said vehicle group telemetry data to a traffic monitoring server via a wide-area channel.

42. A method as claimed in claim 41, wherein each vehicle comprises a communication module according to any one of claims 1 to 9.

43. A method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 42, wherein the merge condition includes determining that the first vehicle group comprises a larger number of vehicles than the second vehicle group.