
GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by DRumberger - 2008/08/18 09:47

I have a PCAS XRX connected to a GPSMAP 396. On just about every trip, I can count on getting a couple of sporadic "Traffic not available" alerts on my GPSMAP 396.

I checked the cables - they look OK. By the time I visually check the link status on the GPSMAP setup screen, it says data available.

I see no other symptoms.

Has anyone else experienced this?

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2008/09/16 10:27

Yes, I have had this happen ever since I bought my XRX earlier this year. I have it linked to a GPSMAP 496. It's very annoying.

I'm sending my unit and integration cable in to ZAON tech support. I've had to send in the XRX on two other occasions due to other problems I've had with the unit. I'm hoping they will just send me a new XRX and cable.

Chad

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by DRumberger - 2008/09/23 15:37

Thanks. I will be curious to know what you find out...

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2008/09/29 14:50

Zaon tech support sent me a new cable and replaced the "main board" in the XRX. I will report back to the forum after I've had a chance to test fly with it.

Chad

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by carr911 - 2008/10/27 11:29

I get this data not available multiple times during flight...i have verified in the garmin that it does lose signal...when I called tech support they "said they had never heard of this issue before"...

is it a cable issue...

or

XRX issue...

does anyone know for sure what causes the issue?

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2008/10/27 11:58

Sorry for the delayed reply/update on this.

Don't let tech support tell you they've never heard of this. I've spoken to most everyone on their team about this at some point.

I did end up sending back my XRX and cable to have this "repaired". Zaon tech support sent me a brand-new cable - and they apparently replaced the "guts" (main board) of the XRX. My preference was to have them send me a brand-new/different XRX, but they suggested just replacing the insides to retain my unit serial number.

I've since received my "repaired" XRX, along with a new data cable. On every flight since, I've been having the "Traffic not available" alert from my 496 - just like I was having before I sent the unit in. Zaon tech support is never able to reproduce the problem in their shop.

There are really only two basic possibilities that would explain this problem. It's either a problem with the XRX (or cable) - or a problem with the Garmin 396/496. Since several people are now reporting this problem, I would highly doubt Garmin has manufactured this many "bad" GPS units. The common thread is that we all have an XRX.

I did notice a couple of possible clues:

The "Traffic not available" alert seems to happen when I transmit on my comm radios (although not always). The alert also seems to happen just after the unit detects traffic. My theory is that maybe a small voltage drop to (or inside) the XRX is causing a "hiccup" with its processor - thus causing an interruption in the TIS data stream being sent to the Garmin. If the problem is with a voltage drop to the power input of the XRX, one test would be to try running the XRX (and Garmin) off of a 12-volt battery (independent of the aircraft power). I have not tried this yet.

The bottom line is that enough of us are having this issue to lead me to believe it's a problem with the XRX. We need to push Zaon to acknowledge this issue and get it fixed. I did a cross-country flight across several states having to listen to the periodic "Traffic not available" alert the entire time. Annoying.

Just curious - for those who have been having this issue, how new are your XRX units? I think I've had mine since March 2008. I'm wondering if the newer units no longer have this problem (you'll notice the case is now black instead of gray)?

Chad

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by carr911 - 2008/10/27 12:06

I just bought my unit...less than 2 months old. So the new units have the same problem.

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by jimbtv - 2008/10/27 12:27

Before you conclude that this is a Zaon problem, consider this.

I have used my XRX with my 496 for about a year now and never saw the problem - until I updated my 496's firmware to version 3.6. Since then I get the message every now and then.

Garmin may have changed something without telling Zaon. :angry:

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2008/10/27 13:54

Good point on the GPS firmware theory.

Does anyone know if you can safely "back-rev" the firmware on a 396/496? I'd like to test this theory.

Also, when replying to this thread, please include your Garmin GPSMAP model (396 or 496) and firmware version. Then we'll have some data to compile and compare.

I have a 496 running firmware version 3.60.

Thanks,

Chad

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by blue thunder - 2008/10/29 09:53

I have recently purchased the XRX and have it linked to my 496. I have installed the unit in an R44 Helicopter. I seem to get the "traffic not available" after a turn. I made a special bracket to hold the XRX level.

Other problems/symptoms: my transponder code always shows 0000
I really don't find that when I see a diamond, the traffic is in the right direction. I have recalibrated the compass.

Anyone else have one mounted in a helicopter?

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by DRumberger - 2008/11/01 09:01

My ZAON XRX is grey, version 2.0. My GPS is Garmin GPSMAP 396 rev 4.50

I power both my GPS and the ZAON from a gel cell battery setup, not aircraft power. (My 1999 172R has no cabin power outlets.)

I haven't been able to tie my traffic unavailable messages to any particular event.

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by DRumberger - 2008/11/03 16:36

Garmin said:

Thank you for contacting Garmin International,

I have checked with the software engineers for the 496 and 396 and there has been no changes to the way those units receive or process the TIS information. Also I noticed that one person was talking about downgrading the software version in his 496. I strongly recommend against doing that. Downgrading software can have negative effects to the units. For example it will delete the unlock to the pre-installed street maps.

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2008/11/03 17:12

Well it certainly sounds like we've all done our homework on this issue.

Does anyone else have any good theories on this? Do we have enough information to go back to ZAON to ask for some answers?

Zaon has acknowledged the issue

Posted by carr911 - 2008/11/04 10:37

this is part of an email sent by zaon to myself.

We have noticed the same trend, and are looking into the cause of this burgeoning issue.

Just to help us out, what type of plane do you fly? How is your XRX mounted?

Thanks

Daniel Evans
Electronic Technician
daniel@zaon.aero
1-800-496-9430 or (469) 916-6640 x311

Re:Zaon has acknowledged the issue

Posted by cgeyen - 2008/11/04 10:57

Is Zaon aware of this thread? It might be useful to them to contact everyone who's been having the issue to gather some data.

I would encourage everyone to contact Zaon if you are still having the issue.

Chad

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by carr911 - 2008/11/18 12:24

I received an email from Zaon yesterday...they believe they have a fix. They are sending an RMA tag so I can get my unit fixed.

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2008/11/18 13:44

I sent an e-mail to ZAON Tech Support on 11/4/08 and got this reply on 11/14/08:

"We have not found anything conclusive yet, but are still working with customers and our board manufacturer on this issue.

Daniel Evans
Electronic Technician
daniel@zaon.aero
1-800-496-9430 or (469) 916-6640 x311"

carr911 - keep us posted on what happens with your RMA.

Thanks,

Chad

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2008/11/21 10:35

I too got an RMA for my XRX. I sent it in to Zaon for the "fix" on November 19. From Zaon tech support:

"Yes we believe we have found the issue, and have a fix for it"

I will post back to this forum once I receive the unit back and have had a chance to test it.

Chad

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2008/12/02 13:44

I received my repaired unit back from Zaon today (12/02/08). I have not had a chance to test it.

The repair notes on the Service Receipt state:

"Found suspected issue. Tightened up cpu socket. Added silicone to corners to prevent vibrating loose."

I will follow up once I've had a chance to test fly the repaired unit.

Chad

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by carr911 - 2008/12/02 14:11

I received my unit also, with the same note from tech support. I will let everyone know how it works.

by the way Dan (technician) at Zaon was great and the turnaround was fast.

:cheer:

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by carr911 - 2008/12/07 15:50

Well I tested my "fixed" unit...it isn't fixed. 1 1/2 hour flight...traffic not available atleast 5 times...I guess it is back to the drawing board.:angry:

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by DRumberger - 2008/12/08 09:20

I'll try to note all the circumstances next time it happens to me:

- o what's the temperature like
- o how long since startup did it happen
- o what's the power source for the ZAON and the GPS
- o any vibration, maneuvering, etc. going on
- o associated with radio transmissions?
- o was it acquiring traffic at the time - or was there nothing around

One thing we don't know is how long a data interruption the Garmin GPS will tolerate before reporting Traffic Unavailable. Is it allowing one second? 5 milliseconds?

In my case, every time I've gone to the TIS setup screen on the Garmin after receiving the lost data alert, the screen reports Data Available. So this is a transient for me - the data isn't lost for long.

Do you suppose this is a case where Garmin's tolerances are too tight for the ZAON? And it's false alarming very brief data interruptions?

I wish I had the ability to fly a serial line analyzer in my plane connected to this system and recording. Then maybe I could report how long the dropped data incident is. But of course, when we do something like that the problem never happens. I suspect the "watched pot" syndrome is one reason ZAON's having trouble finding this.

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by carr911 - 2008/12/08 09:36

Questions answered...

what's the temperature like
inside the cabin was comfortable (70) degrees.

o how long since startup did it happen
happened within 10 minutes of taking off.

o what's the power source for the ZAON and the GPS
airplane through garmin interface cable.

o any vibration, maneuvering, etc. going on
straight and level flight.

o associated with radio transmissions?
no.

o was it acquiring traffic at the time - or was there nothing around
one question I can't answer for sure...but I think no traffic.

One thing we don't know is how long a data interruption the Garmin GPS will tolerate before
I think this might be our issue

reporting Traffic Unavailable. Is it allowing one second? 5 milliseconds?
I have watched the garmin tis screen no data available only lasts a second or two.

In my case, every time I've gone to the TIS setup screen on the Garmin after receiving the lost
data alert, the screen reports Data Available. So this is a transient for me - the data isn't lost for long.

Do you suppose this is a case where Garmin's tolerances are too tight for the ZAON? And it's false alarming very brief data interruptions?

I think this is our problem...the tolerances are too tight...I don't think this is a safety issue...more of an annoyance issue.

I wish I had the ability to fly a serial line analyzer in my plane connected to this system and recording. Then maybe I could report how long the dropped data incident is. But of course, when

we do something like that the problem never happens. I suspect the "watched pot" syndrome is one reason ZAON's having trouble finding this.

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by jimbtv - 2008/12/08 09:37

My dropouts occur mostly when I am within about 500 feet above the airport on final. I don't get many drops in cruise.

I've spent 30+ years selling, installing and servicing electronic equipment and my days of doing free field testing for manufacturers stopped years ago. This is their job, not ours. My responsibility ends when I bring them a bona fide problem that has been duplicated by others. If they then elect to sit on their heels, focusing on sales and not service, my next responsibility is to the future purchasers, informing them of my honest experiences.

I callz them as I seez them...

=====

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2008/12/08 10:38

Not that I don't want to help fix the problem, but I tend to agree with jimbtv. When in the air, I prefer to focus on flying the aircraft - and not troubleshooting the electronics.

If this is a problem somehow related to the Garmin units, this is up to Zaon and Garmin to resolve. I'll provide whatever field data I can to help diagnose the problem. But Zaon should be doing the leg work.

Personally I'm not finding Zaon to be very cooperative with this issue. I've been trying to provide them with information and clues, asking questions, and generally keeping in the loop on the issue. However, I continue to see pattern of unresponsiveness from them when I contact them via e-mail. I've documented several instances where I will e-mail them a simple question and not hear back for several weeks or a month. This is unacceptable.

I'm more than willing to help with this issue anyway I can, but this is Zaon's product and reputation we're talking about. If they don't step up to the plate, it's going to be their loss.

Chad

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by DRumberger - 2008/12/08 11:59

I wish ZAON had the ability to fly a serial line analyzer in a plane connected to this system and recording. Then maybe they could report how long the dropped data incident is.

:)

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by jimbtv - 2008/12/08 12:16

DRumberger wrote:

I wish ZAON had the ability to fly a serial line analyzer in a plane.. Every company HAS that option. It is whether they have the desire or the need. Right now they apparently have neither.

=====

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2009/01/08 13:13

I finally had a chance to fly with the XRX after it was repaired by Zaon in December. I'm sorry to report that I am still getting the "Traffic not available" alert on a regular basis. At least one other Zaon customer has reported the same thing after the repair.

Also, they had sent me a new interface cable for the XRX and Garmin. After only one flight, the cable began to pull part where the two thin cables feed into the quick-disconnect (which then feeds to the power cable going to the Garmin. It appears there are no strain reliefs build in to that part of the cable. Some of the wires have actually pulled lose and the cable is no longer usable.

I've contact Zaon again to see what they would like to do next.

Anyone else sent their's in for repair?

Chad

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by DRumberger - 2009/01/08 21:08

I'm not going to send mine in unless there is a definite fix. I'm afraid of them making the situation worse. As it stands mine doesn't drop out extremely frequently, just once in awhile.

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by blue thunder - 2009/01/09 13:05

That doesn't sound real good. Here is the reply I got back from Daniel Evans yesterday:

Yes we do have a fix for it. If you would like to get this handled, I need your serial number so I can issue an RMA for the fix.

I really don't want to send it in if it is going to come back with the same problem:S

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2009/01/09 13:28

I sent an e-mail to Daniel yesterday but have not heard back. Unfortunately this is quite common. I probably won't hear back from him until I e-mail him a couple more times - and then it will have been a week or two that will have gone by. I've owned Zaon products for years (since they came out with their very first traffic unit when they were part of "SureCheck"). I've had this same experience with them since day one - and I've tried very hard to be a good customer.

I try not to pester these people and am cordial when I communicate with them. So I can't think of a good reason why they are so bad at replying. Maybe it's that they know there is a problem and they just don't know what to do about it. It's probably not good for business.

If you send in your XRX for "the fix", I don't think your problems will get worse. But it may be worth doing it just to see what results you get. The more people that continue to have these issues, even after "the fix", the better chance we have of showing Zaon that this is not just an isolated problem.

Fortunately I purchased my XRX at Sporty's - which essentially has a 1-year return policy. I plan to send my unit back

next week and ask for a full refund. I may then purchase a completely new unit and cable from them - just to see if the problem continues. If it does, I am probably done doing business with Zaon. I've given them too many chances to get this right.

If any of you do send your XRX in for "the fix", please report back to this forum with the results.

Thanks,

Chad

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2009/02/09 12:07

Since my last post, I finally did hear back from Daniel at Zaon on 2/4/2009 - roughly three and a half weeks after e-mail him to tell him I was still having the problem with my XRX after they applied their "fix". His reply was:

"Part of the problem is that we have not been able to recreate the issue you are describing."

In an e-mail from Zaon in November 2008 they stated:

"Yes we believe we have found the issue, and have a fix for it, just send your XRX in and we will take care of it."

So it appears Zaon is now saying they no longer the cause of the issue?

Anyone else had any success - or updates on their story?

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by srobertson32 - 2009/07/12 09:27

I am having the same issue with an XRX I purchased in May, 2009 and a Garmin 496. The first time I used it, it worked as advertised with traffic displayed on the 496. The next two flight all I got was traffic not available. I verified everything was still set as the original first flight.

I notice there has been no update on this topic since January, 2009. Has there been a resolution to the issue?

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by DRumberger - 2009/07/13 19:00

I gave up. I still have the trouble now and then, but I have decided to live with it rather than send my unit back for a non-fix. It doesn't happen to me frequently enough to justify the risk.

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Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by cgeyen - 2009/07/13 20:53

I finally ended up sending my unit back to Sporty's. Fortunately they have a very generous return policy.

While I agree with the value of having traffic detection in my plane, I didn't want the XRX to become the proverbial "boy who cried wolf". The false alerts had gotten to the point where I began to ignore the XRX.

I'm hoping I'll eventually hear that Zaon has confidently solved the problem. Until then, I guess I'll be working my eyes a bit harder scanning for traffic. Plus I can afford a few more \$100 hamburgers now with the money I have back in my pocket from the XRX return.

For those still holding on to the XRX (and having the integration problems), I encourage you to continue to put pressure on Zaon to figure this out. It's their demise if they don't. You've spent a lot of money on their product. You should expect it to work as advertised.

And don't you find it interesting that no one from Zaon has posted in this thread?

Chad

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by srobertson32 - 2009/07/25 15:21

Since my last post I contacted Zaon via their on line email. I exchanged two informational emails with Daniel who then suggested I send them my unit. Within a week I had the unit back and the service receipt stated "swapped board, traffic tested".

I flew today with the unit and it appears to be back to working normally again. My only question is I could not verify some of the traffic the unit was displaying so I will have to continue to check that part of the operation.

But the main issue is corrected, the unit is displaying traffic on my 496 again.

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by geofa - 2009/09/04 21:26

I just bought my unit at Oshkosh a few weeks ago and am having the same problem.

My question would be "Traffic not available" has obviously been programmed into the unit(s) to mean something. Why is it going off and what is it supposed to represent.

My unit seems to be calling traffic fine-but I get this message very frequently.

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by geofa - 2009/09/05 11:59

Another report. I went flying today and got the warning on a regular time basis-about every 2.5 minutes. After landing I turned power off to the zaon-and promptly got the warning. So the warning appears to come from the Garmin and is possibly an alert to the zaon malfunctioning or turning off?

Re:GPSMap 396 loses XRX traffic link occasionally

Posted by DRumberger - 2009/09/07 15:52

The very best of luck in getting the "Traffic not available" problem fixed. Obviously the ZAON XRX frequently, if not always, has this problem when paired with a Garmin x96 portable.

ZAON is obviously no longer going to address the issue, and is going to sell the units to Garmin users, including an interface guide, without mentioning it.