

Telus leads \$120-million investment in Ontario urban-tech startup Miovision

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Miovision CEO Kurtis McBride in Kitchener, Ont., on Jan. 27, 2020.

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Miovision is one of the Kitchener-Waterloo region's leading startups blending hardware and services. It helps more than 17,000 municipalities worldwide monitor and manage traffic with the help of sensors and video analysis powered by artificial intelligence.

The funding will help the company further develop its TrafficLink program, which lets cities adjust intersection signals for situations such as emergencies or congestion, and Telus will also remove roadblocks for Miovision to grow in new countries by giving it access to the telecom's partner networks.

The smart-intersection company uses cellular networks to send data from traffic-signal hardware to a secure cloud service for analysis using SIM cards – the same tiny chip-containing cards that connect cellphones to data networks.

Miovision already regularly uses Telus's network in Canada. But now, on top of Miovision's bulk-buying discount, Telus will grant the company discounted access to its partner networks abroad using those cards, enabling it to set up in new countries much more easily. "We don't have to establish new relationships" with local carriers, Miovision chief executive officer Kurtis McBride said in an interview.

The move would also give Telus greater ability to build out next-generation 5G cellular networks. Should it want, Mr. McBride said, it could attach the necessary shoebox-sized 5G "small cells" to Miovision's hardware at intersections.

The new investment round, led by Telus Ventures and including contributions from returning Toronto-based investor McRock Capital and others, includes an undisclosed amount of secondary share purchases as older investors cash out. It includes \$100-million in equity and \$20-million in debt financing; the company declined to share how much the new investment would change its valuation.

Telus Ventures managing partner Rich Osborn was not available for an interview, but said in an e-mail that, "We think that together we can create financial and social value by helping customers build healthier, happier and safer communities."

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Miovision sees itself as more than just a traffic-tech company. Mr. McBride and his staff want to play a role in shaping how cities collect and use data.

Cities worldwide are grappling with how to deploy digital technology in civic infrastructure, and doing so requires a plan for all the new kinds of data that will be produced. Miovision hopes to be a standard-bearer by ensuring that such data is compatible and shareable between city departments, urban-tech companies and cities themselves.

With such “open” data architecture, these groups can find patterns of city life that can be used to develop further innovations to improve city living.

Traditional traffic-pattern data is collected in analog fashion – sometimes by people standing on the side of the road counting cars or by magnet-powered sensors buried in roads. Sometimes whole neighbourhoods change before traffic studies are done to reconfigure intersections because the process is slow. Miovision’s digital collection tools, which include 360-degree cameras that anonymize information that could identify people, can let cities know how intersections are used at all times.

“We can generate data, and ultimately analytics and insights, to allow cities to make more agile, real-time decisions,” Mr. McBride said.

The City of Toronto has already used Miovision technologies to collect traffic data along King Street to measure the success of making it a transit-first corridor. In Detroit, the company has deployed a mix of sensors, video detection and remote monitoring to make intersections safer in numerous ways.

In Miovision’s project area there, cyclists can be detected and given extended green lights, connected cars can be warned that jaywalkers are ahead and priority can be given to emergency vehicles.

Mr. McBride sees opportunities to monetize Miovision’s hardware beyond his own company. Not only could telecoms such as Telus use Miovision’s gear to expand their 5G infrastructure, Mr. McBride also imagines that cities or third-party companies could choose to add additional

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