

OLD CARS AND NEW LAWS PLUS WHATSUP HERE AND THERE



By Larry Becker

The National Highway Safety Administration (NHSA) has issued a proposed rule that will require hybrid and electric vehicles make a minimum level of sound in order to alert pedestrians and bicyclists of their presence. The automakers would have a wide selection of choices when creating a sound. The sound would need to be detectable over a range of street noises and other background sounds when the vehicle is moving under 18 mph. At 18 mph and above, the vehicle should produce sufficient sound on its own to be heard.

Do you know that your new car has a black box (called an event recorder) that tracks your seat belt use, speed, steering, braking and at least a dozen other bits of data? The box is about the size of a deck of cards and almost impossible to remove. In Dec., the Department of Transportation's National Highway Safety Administration proposed a new standard that would require all auto makers to install event data recorders in all passenger vehicles to capture safety-related data in the seconds during a motor vehicle crash and will help explain the dynamics of a crash and inform future efforts to improve vehicle safety. There is also a big push for installation of rearview cameras on new vehicles.

Close, but no cigar! Jonathan Frieman of Marin Count Ca, was ticketed on Oct. 2nd, for driving in the carpool lane during restricted hours. The officer was not impressed when Frieman showed him his incorporation papers, claiming that his corporation was a person. Corporation personhood has been the heart of the ongoing debate ever since the U.S. Supreme Court granted corporations the same First Amendment rights as people and unleashed a torrent of corporate political contributions. Frieman's attorney argued that when a corporation is present in one's car, it is sufficient to qualify as two person occupancy for commuter lane purposes. Frieman lost his bid in traffic court on Jan. 7th. but says he's

prepared to appeal the case all the way up to the California State Supreme Court in an effort to expose the impracticality of corporate personhood.

States are scrambling to find taxes to pay for highway repairs, and their public transit systems, including payroll and sales taxes, and raising taxes paid by gasoline taxes. The proposals, being kicked around by 13 states as governors lay out their legislative agendas for the year, comes as states find revenue from stagnant federal and state gasoline taxes isn't keeping up with highways, bridges and urban transit systems that increasingly are falling in disrepair. So, we can expect to see more and increased taxes.

Most federal and state Legislators are involved in discussions about new gun control laws, so we can not expect to see much new legislation pertaining to vehicles.

ARIZONA

The state is purchasing land along State Route 96 to build six bear tunnels in a project that will allow the bears to avoid often-deadly traffic. The passages will be placed in spots where bears typically attempt to cross, which often include places where streams and wet areas meet the highway.

CALIFORNIA

Tailpipe testing will be no longer be done on vehicles dating back to the year 2000 or newer starting Jan. 1st according to a statement from the Air Resources Board. A new test will rely on advanced monitoring of on-board diagnostic systems that can trigger a "check engine" light. Owners of vehicles made prior to 1999 will be referred to the new "Star" inspection stations. Only inspection stations meeting what CARB terms "the tough new standards" will be rated as "STAR Certified" and permitted to inspect 1999 and older vehicles. The change over to the new testing requirements will take place over the next year.

The following laws took effect in California on Jan. 1st:

AB 1303 tightens the restrictions on the use of red-light cameras but bolsters their legal underpinnings by stating that evidence from them is not hearsay.

AB 1536 allows drivers to dictate, send or listen to text messages while driving if they use a hands-free device.

AB 1047 prohibits local governments from conducting motorcycle-only checkpoints

AB 2405 exempts certain hybrid and other clean-fuel vehicles from paying a toll to use HOT carpool lanes accepting single-occupant vehicles.

SB 1298 permits autonomous vehicles (cars that drive themselves) on public roads subject to safety certification and the presence of a human in case of an accident.

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency announced that as of Jan. 6th, all SFMTA parking meters in San Francisco will require payment on Sundays from noon to 6 p.m. with a 4 hour time limit. Meters on Fisherman's Wharf will continue to operate from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday thru Sunday. Meters in the Port of San Francisco jurisdiction (along the waterfront and some side streets) will continue to operate from 7 a.m. to 11 p., Monday thru Sunday.

A question concerning bike riders riding in the center of a traffic lane received this answer from the state. State laws say cyclists shall ride in the lane with cars if there isn't room on the right. Dave Snyder of CA Bicycle Coalition said that cyclists are taught in safety classes that the safest place in a lane is right in the middle, so cars won't sideswipe them. But if a cyclist can not keep up with the traffic, the protocol is to move back over to the right when there is room.

The California State Transportation Commission says California has \$538.1 billion in transportation needs. Gov. Brown's Transportation Agency will soon convene a working group to refine the commission's assessment and explore long-term pay-as-you-go funding options. California has the third highest fuel tax (more than 50 cents per gallon) but is among the lowest states in having motorists and other transportation users pay for their services through fees and taxes. A report from the Tax Foundation states that California's users pay for less than a third for building and maintaining streets, roads, highways and transit services. Most of the costs are paid by taxes for retail services, the state's general fund, transportation bonds, city and county property taxes and federal grants.

COLORADO

Boulder County requires new single-family detached homes to be set up so owners can charge an electric car there – or at least be able to accommodate installation of an outlet to charge a 240-volt vehicle later. The code also requires new single-family detached homes to have solar panel systems – or solar thermal systems or at least a conduit so the necessary wiring and plumbing can easily be installed later.

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut veterans will soon be able to have their military status marked on their driver's license or state issued ID cards. A new law that took effect Jan 1 requires the DMV and AAA offices to begin issuing the cards with a symbol of the American flag to identify someone's status as a veteran.

The Motor Transport Association, which represents trucking companies, is asking legislators to ban deicers like magnesium chloride on its roads, saying that it is too corrosive. Association President Michael Riley told the Republican-American of Waterbury that the chemical is corroding trucks at an unprecedented rate.

FLORIDA

Previously, drivers in Florida were cited for flashing their headlights at oncoming traffic to warn them of traffic enforcements points ahead. The police said it was illegal for drivers to flash their headlights. Under a new law as of Jan. 1st, it is no long illegal to flash your headlights at an oncoming vehicle.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA - WASHINGTON

The city plans to add 134 traffic cameras, more than double its network of devices that generate tickets for running red lights. Traffic cameras generated a record \$85 million in revenue during the last fiscal year.

The Taxi Cab Commission will require all taxi cabs to accept credit cards by March 30th. But another part of the reforms approved last year, the new so called "smart meter" has hit a snag because of a flawed contracting process.

GEORGIA

Macon City Councilman Frank Tompkins is proposing an ordinance to make it easier for citizens to use wheelchairs and electric scooters on city roads. One rule would require scooters or chairs to have reflectors or lights. He also wants the city to install plug-in stations to help keep the machines powered, the Macon Telegraph reports.

A man is suing the Georgia Dept. of Driver Services, contending his rights were violated when the state rejected his application for vanity plates referring to his sexual orientation. James Gilbert of Atlanta, alleges in his lawsuit that state officials rejected his application for the tags 4GAYLIB, GAYPWR and GAYGUY, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reports.

A bill has been introduced in Georgia to alter the definition of “fair market value” to force owners of antique, hobby, and special interest vehicles to pay an increased annual tax by assessing their value at the retail selling price or their value contained within the assessment manual, whichever is greater. Since current law requires antique, hobby and special interest vehicles to be valued at only \$100 for tax purposes, the retail selling price will inevitably create a substantial tax burden on these owners and have corresponding deleterious effect on the businesses that serve these vehicles.

IDAHO

An automobile group says Idaho should ban cellphone use by drivers 18 and under. AAA of Idaho’s Dave Carlson argues protection for teens are necessary because they are over-represented in fatal and injury crash statistics. The 2012 legislature banned texting while driving for everyone.

ILLINOIS

Tolls for the Chicago Skyway increased from \$3.50 to \$4 on Jan 1st. The 8 mile stretch is run by the private Skyway Concessions Company, which has a 99-year lease with the city.

MAINE

Legislation has been introduced in the state Senate to remove a provision in the law that requires that the overall diameter of motor vehicle tires be within 2 in. of the size recommended by the vehicle manufacturer. The Maine Motor Vehicle Inspection Manual already requires a vehicle to fail inspection if a tire contacts any part of the body of the vehicle. The bill provides that a vehicle must still comply with applicable frame height requirements which vary according to gross vehicle weight rating. Because tire size will affect frame height, frame height limits can already effectively regulate against inappropriate tire size.

MASSACHUSETTS

The Worcester City Council has given preliminary approval to an ordinance that would ban aggressive panhandling” of people who ask for money while walking in and out of traffic or while standing on traffic islands at intersections. The vote also put an end to “tag days”, a practice where representatives of charities and youth sports groups solicit donations from motorists at intersections.

MINNESOTA

A court of appeals has ruled that there is no such thing as drunken driving while on a Segway. The appellate court said the battery-powered, self-balancing two wheel personal transit machine is not a motor vehicle, the Pioneer Press reports. Mark Greenman was stopped by police on Feb. 4 and charged with DUI after police spotted his Segway drifting twice across the center line in the road. His blood alcohol level was 0.19 or twice the legal limit.

MONTANA

Lawmakers are considering a renewed effort to test impaired drivers for illegally driving under the influence of marijuana. The Montana Highway Patrol said that there is a significant increase in the number of people driving under the influence of the drug. The state crime lab already tests blood samples in drunk driving and other crimes for levels of THC- an ingredient in marijuana. But there is no state law defining an illegal threshold

NEBRASKA

Police in Lincoln installed street cameras at a busy downtown intersection to keep watch on rowdy patrons outside bars. The question is, will they also be used as traffic cameras?

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire motorists can now get a real-time view of traffic conditions. The N. H. Dept. of transportation is working with a Virginia company called TrafficLand to allow the public to view videos from cameras positioned in 10 locations around the state.

NEWJERSEY

The South Jersey Transportation Authority has sent letters to 147 people and companies with at least \$200 in unpaid tolls on the Atlantic City Expressway warning them the deadline to settle up is Feb. 7th or risk losing their vehicle registration.

NEW MEXICO

Some proposals filed by state lawmakers before the start of the Legislature's session include bills that aim to confront drunken driving and political corruption, (are they relate). The 60 day session began on Jan. 15th.

Police in Albuquerque say some motorists are using smartphones to avoid sobriety checkpoints. Police say smartphone apps, texting and social media are being used to spread word of where checkpoints are located.

Gov. Martinez on Jan. 23rd stated that she remains committed to "full repeal" of a state law that allows illegal immigrants to obtain drivers licenses. Martinez had signaled that she was willing to compromise with state Democrats a day earlier.

NEW YORK

The city of New York is replacing 6,300 parking signs by spring with signage that's no longer than 140 characters (from 250 characters), and simpler rules.

Legislation has been introduced in the New York Senate to provide that historical vehicle owners only pay a one-time registration fee of \$100 upon initial registration. The bill had been approved by the full senate last fall, but died in the Assembly when the legislature adjourned for the year. Under New York law, a historical motor vehicle is either a vehicle manufactured more than 25 years ago or one who which has unique characteristics and which is determined to be of historical or exhibition value. The reduced registration fee would be available to owners of historical vehicles owned and operated as an exhibition piece or collector's item and used for club activities, exhibits, tours, parades, occasional transportation and similar uses. The \$100 one-time fee would replace the current annual fee of \$28.75.

OHIO

The village of Elmwood Place installed two traffic cameras in September, and issued 6,600 citations in the first month, or three times the number of residents, with a reported \$1.5 million in speeding fines overall.

RHODE ISLAND

State Rep. Peter Palumbo is pushing legislation allowing police to issue \$85 tickets to motorists who allow their pet to sit in their lap while driving.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Lawmakers will consider making it illegal for young drivers with instruction permits to carry more than one passenger at a time and from using electronic devices according to the Argus Leader newspaper. South Dakota allows drivers to obtain a permit at age 14.

TENNESSEE

The state is opening self-service kiosks that will allow drivers to renew or replace their driver license and state ID cards. The kiosks will be installed at places like AAA offices or local government offices.

TEXAS

Police in San Juan are targeting gang members with roadside checkpoints. Vehicles are stopped at the checkpoints and checked for violations regarding insurance, seatbelts and driver's licenses. Police Chief Juan Gonzales said gang members are asked to voluntarily allow officers to photograph the gang tattoos, and their information is added to a state gang database. (Are CHVA members considered a Gang??)

A \$1 billion expansion on Interstate 35E between Dallas and Denton is expected to begin by mid year and take 3 ½ years to complete.

VIRGINIA

Legislation which proposes to reduce the number of license plates furnished by the DMV to register motor vehicles is being supported by SEMA. Under the bill, favored by state hobbyists, the DMV would issue only one license plate (rather than two) and require the single plate to be attached to the rear of the vehicle. The measure applies to every registered motor vehicle, semitrailer or trailer, including hobby cars, such as antique, reconstructed or replica vehicles.

VERMONT

Vermont plans to start a "DUI court," the intent of which is to treat alcoholism and reduce the number of repeat offenders. Gov. Shumlin says DUI court, like the state's drug court program, would serve nonviolent offenders and reduce prison costs by keeping people out of jail, Shumlin told the Burlington Free Press newspaper. State officials estimated the prison savings would be about \$600,000 a year.

A bill to ban motor-vehicle exhaust systems that increase the noise level has been introduced. Under the bill, violators would not pass the state's required inspections and would be subject to fines. The measure does not provide an opportunity for vehicle hobbyists to install and use exhaust systems that meet an objective decibel limit under a fair and predictable test and would make it difficult for hobbyists to replace factory exhaust systems with more durable, better performing options.

WASHINGTON

A version of SEMA-model legislation has been reintroduced in the state Senate to prohibit cities or towns from enforcing an ordinance, development regulation, zoning regulation or administrative practice that prevents automobile collectors from pursuing their hobby. Junked, wrecked or inoperable vehicles stored on private property would only require screening from public view. Under the bill, six or fewer vehicles that are 30 years old or older, including one parts car, would be permitted for hobby vehicle restoration as long as restoration is an ancillary of the property.

WESTVIRGINIA

The state expects to save at least \$600,000 annually by switching to flat license plates that are digitally printed rather than embossed.

WISCONSIN

A citizen commission says state officials should raise the gas tax, impose mileage-based fees and increase registration and driver's license fees to cover transportation needs. The 2012-13 state budget, created the commission to advise Gov. Walker on how to finance state transportation needs over the next decade.

WYOMING

Legislation has been introduced in the Wyoming legislature to increase annual vehicle registration fees by \$10 for passenger vehicles and double the registration fee based on unladen vehicle weight for non-commercial trucks. For example, the registration fee for a vehicle weighing 6,001 lbs or more would rise from \$60 to \$120. Under Wyoming law, "passenger car" means a motor vehicle designed to carry 10 persons or less and be primarily used to transport persons, including ambulances and hearses, but

excluding motorcycles, motor homes, multipurpose vehicles, trucks and school buses. Non-commercial trucks would be subject to the doubled registration fees including personal pickups.

WHAATSUUP HERE AND THERE

The San Francisco Bay Bridge is being fitted with a coat of 25,000 white LED lights, transforming the gray structure into a shimmering undulating light sculpture. Lights will flicker on and off and dim and brighten in waves and pulses on the 1.8-mile span between San Francisco and Treasure Island starting March 5th. The cost is \$8 million and being paid for by donations.

Tourism officials in Tupelo Mississippi hope a new Graceland exhibit about Elvis Presley's boyhood will draw visitors to his birthplace in Tupelo. The exhibit in Memphis showcases posters and memorabilia from every Tupelo Elvis Festival and a movie entitled Tupelo.

Sad News! After 13 years of operation, the Walter P. Chrysler Museum on the Chrysler campus in Auburn Hills Mi, is closing for good. Waning attendance meant the 55,000 square foot museum couldn't meet its own costs. The vehicles in the museum will be retained by the Chrysler Foundation, the automakers charitable arm.

Nisan is extending its warranty limits on its Leaf plug-in car. Nisan will repair or replace the car's lithium battery if it loses more than 30% of its ability to hold a charge for five years or 60,000 miles according to reports.

GM and Saab Automobile Parts North America have reached an agreement on warranty service coverage for Saab owners in the U.S. The agreement says SPNA will provide warranty administration and related services for

2009 vehicles and prior Saab vehicles still covered under GM's limited warranty.

The original Batmobile from the 1960 TV series sold at the Barrett-Jackson Auction in Scottsdale Az. for only \$4.2 million. The name of the buyer is not known at this time.

The largest free car show in the Midwest is moving 12 miles, from Sioux Falls to Brandon. KSFY-TV reported the Automania car show, which draws 50,000 to 70,000 people each year, is scheduled for June 28-30th.

President Obama's ride has a new license plate. The white House said in mid January that the president agreed to replace the license plates on his limo so that they display the "Taxation Without Representation" design the District of Colombia uses. On Jan. 20th, the lead vehicle of the president's motorcade was sporting the plate with the number 800 002. That's the number city officials said they would issue to the president.

Councilmen in Kerry (Ireland) passed a motion in late January asking the government to create a permit that would allow isolated farmers the ability to drink a few pints and then return home in their cars, or on their tractors, without fear of being busted! But, Justice Minister Alan Shatter shot down the proposal in a speech in Parliament as "grossly irresponsible."

Larry Becker

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Remember Valentine's Day is coming soon and it is not nice to buy your "sweetie" something for the car.