

CONTEMPORARY HISTORICAL VEHICLE ASSOCIATION, Inc.

OLD CARS AND NEW LAWS PLUS WHAATSUUP HERE AND THERE

By Larry Becker



Self Driving Cars?? The move toward self-driving cars is picking up speed quickly enough that federal safety officials are urging states not to license such cars except for testing and has told companies that make them to be vigilant and uniform in testing the automated vehicles. On May 30th the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration announced a policy, a research plan and guidelines “for states, and the industry, on how to move ahead on their testing programs.” There are still hundreds of questions about self-driving cars that need to be answered.

Sales of electric vehicles are slow and manufacturers are cutting lease costs in attempts to stimulate slow-sellers. Only about 15,000 electric vehicles have been sold in California since 2008. Nationally, buyers have registered nearly 32,000 electric vehicles. Most potential buyers say that the cost of electric vehicles is too expensive even with state and federal incentives.

An article by James Healey states that the savings from plug-in vehicles can evaporate fast. A Chevy Volt (cheapest model) plug-in costs \$28,495 with all the rebates or \$8,605 more than the Chevy Cruze, on which the Volt is based, and has more leg-room for passengers. The Ford electric Focus costs \$30,495 after rebates and tax credits. The gasoline Ford Focus with automatic, costs starts at \$18,090. The electric vehicles run on expensive batteries (\$4,000 up if out of the 100,000 mile

warranty), home recharging stations (quick charge) cost \$1,500 to \$3,000. If you use a 120 volt recharging station, it can take several hours to charge. The electric vehicles all have a short driving range less than 100 miles. At present, it is uncertain what depreciation costs are associated with electric vehicles.

A new study by the University of Utah shows that “cognitive distraction” is something that drivers are not aware of, so they go through a red light or a stop sign and be totally unaware they’ve missed it. They will tell you that they never saw it. This is even tho your eyes were on the road, but you may be on the phone, punching an address into your GPS, or using a voice activated app to send a text message , there is a disconnect between your eyeballs and your brain. The studies most surprising findings is the technology developed to enhance the safety of text messaging while driving isn’t very effective.

Need new tires for your vehicle and can not afford them? How about renting a set? There is a company, Rent-N-Roll, who does that. The first rent-to-own tire and wheel dealers appeared in the mid 90’s, targeting people who needed tires, but did not have the money to purchase a set and also had a poor credit rating. People who buy from these companies pay a high cost and high interest rates on their loans. One couple “rented” a basic set of Hancock tires for 18 months with a monthly payment of \$54.60 for a total cost of \$942, almost triple what the tires would have cost at Wal Mart. Another customer paid over \$3,000 for a set that most tire stores sell for \$1,340. If the customer does not make or is late with the payment, the tire rental companies will come out and take the tires off the vehicle. Most tire rental companies have the buyers sign iron-clad contracts that even bankruptcy filings can’t make the debt go away.

Need a parking space? Got big bucks? A spot in San Francisco’s trendy South Beach neighborhood sold the second week of June for only \$82,000, the san Francisco Chronicle reported. The 8x12-foot parking space is in an enclosed garage in a condominium building near the San Francisco Giants ballpark. A Porsche was seen parked in it on June 11th. The unidentified buyer refused requests for an interview by the Chronicle. While it seems like a lot of money, real estate agents said parking could be a good investment in densely packed S.F., where vehicle spaces go for a premium. They can also add as much \$100,000 to the purchase price of a property or be rented out at rates of \$400 to \$500 a month-the going rate in South beach. The Chronicle reports that condos in the South Beach area sell for \$1,000 per square foot. However, parking is such a premium commodity in Boston, that Lisa Blumenthal paid \$560,000 for two off-street parking spaces near her multimillion dollar home in Boston’s Bach Bay neighborhood. She purchased the spaces in June during an on-site

auction held in a steady rain by the IRS. The IRS had seized the spaces from a man who owed back taxes.

Could your driveway be making you sick? Some cities, states and businesses are starting to ban a common pavement sealer linked to higher cancer risks and contaminated soil. These sealants used mostly in the eastern half of the USA to beautify pavement and extend its life, contain up to 35% coal tar pitch, which the National Toxicology Program considers a human carcinogen. Several cities and states have banned the use of the product and several major retailers (Home Depot, etc) have stopped selling the product. More information about the product is available on several web sites. (Information from an article by Wendy Koch of the USA Today newspaper.)

According to ABC news, road rage has doubled in the last five years. More and more drivers are expressing anger at other drivers who cut them off or other minor traffic offences.

Not all of the following state bills are laws at this time. They have recently been introduced and are currently under consideration by the respective state legislators.

CALIFORNIA

No, its not called a California state “park” because cars get stuck in line at admission kiosks. Park officials plan to speed up and simplify the entrance process by installing equipment to let visitors pay fees with the flick of a wrist, using ATM or credit cards. No longer would the emphasis be on asking visitors to pay with cash or check – and no longer would entrants have to drive up to an employee at a kiosk. Plans call for the automation to be installed at about a dozen locations. The machines will allow park visitors to pay for admission for an hour or two, perhaps a morning, not necessarily a whole day. The machines are equipped with devices to deter ID theft.

D.C. WASHINGTON

The City Council will vote in early June on a proposal to name a street after Dimitar Peshev, who is credited with helping save Bulgaria’s Jewish population during the Holocaust.

Speed cameras and red-light cameras took in \$84.9 million in fiscal 2012, the Washington Post reports. The \$8 million box under the 24th Street Bridge on K Street is on pace to set a city record by a speed camera. (So, if you are driving in the D.C., be aware of the cameras.)

City officials have proposed expanding the Circulator bus with a new route serving the National Mall. Rides cost \$1, and many of the routes include destinations popular with tourists.

DELAWARE

Law officers issued 1,010 citations during the annual Click it or Ticket campaign in May. The Office of Highway Safety reported its two-week seatbelt enforcement campaign involved traffic safety checkpoints and saturation patrols day and night across the state.

The Delaware River and Bay Authority officials hope \$800,000 in upgrades to the Cape-Lewes ferry will help boost ticket sales. Renovations to three of the four vessels in the fleet include improved seating, Wi-Fi access, flat panel TVs, new floors and an improved concession stand.

HAWAII

The 50th state in the nation becomes the 40th state to ban texting while driving. In addition, the law signed by Gov. Abercrombie also bans using a hand-held phone while driving.

ILLNOIS

The transportation for Illinois Coalition is pushing a new gas tax for deteriorating roads, the Associated Press reports. The group wants to replace the 19-cents-per-gallon motor fuel tax with a 9.5% wholesale tax, adding about 14 cents to a gallon of gas.

INDIANA

Drivers who have to show proof of insurance to police after an accident or traffic violation can do so electronically through an app provided by insurers starting July 1 under a new law.

The 140 year-old Spencerville Covered Bridge, which was badly damaged when a semi drove through it, has reopened.

KANSAS

The Kansas Dept. of Transportation has awarded nearly \$18 million to projects around the state through its transportation enhancement program. The enhancement program helps counties, cities and other agencies with projects, including pedestrian traffic, historic restoration and conversion of abandoned rail road lines into bike trails.

MASSACHUSETTS

The state Dept. of Transportation plans a three month closure of the Callahan Tunnel, which carries traffic from downtown to Logan International Airport. The closure starting in Jan. 2014 will allow for what officials say is a complete rehabilitation of the 52 year old tunnel. The project's cost is estimated at just under \$35 million.

MINNESOTA

Counties are considering whether to use a new tool to raise money to pay for maintaining and improving roads, The St. Cloud Times reports. The Wheelage tax is charged annually on all vehicles kept in the county. In the past, only the Twin Cities counties have been authorized to the \$5 tax. This year, the Legislature increased the amount to \$10 and expanded the option to levy in all 87 counties.

MISSOURI

Kansas City has approved a five-year extension for red-light cameras at several intersections around the city. Police have said red-light running and crashes are down at most of those intersections.

Bicycle riders in Kansas City will have an easier time navigating downtown streets and connecting to the city's east side as well as communities to the west beginning next year. The City Council has approved a plan to stripe nearly 12 miles of bike lanes in the heart of downtown.

MONTANA

The state Highway Patrol is changing its toll-free number for non-emergency traffic concerns as it changes its phone service company to save over \$81,000 a year. The new number is 1-855-MPH-3777 or 1- 855-647-3777

U.S. Forest officials want to remove about five miles of road near Chessman Reservoir in the Helena National Forest. Officials say removing the dozen or so stretches of roads would improve wildlife habitat.

NEBRASKA

A license plate honoring Union Pacific railroad's history in the state was named the best new license plate in the country. The Automotive License Plate Collectors Association picked the special license plate that was issued last year when the railroad celebrated its 150th anniversary.

NEW JERSEY

N.J. Transit is banning all beverages on the North Jersey Coast Line trains when concerts are held at the PNC Bank Art Center. The trains stop in Matawan where shuttle buses run to the arts center.

A natural gas fueling station has opened at a facility where recycled municipal solid waste is converted into electricity. The project by Covanta Energy and Clean Energy Fuels could be the first step toward replacing the city's fleet of garbage trucks with those that burn compressed natural gas.

NEW YORK

The Legislature has given final approval to a measure that would name Route 375 after Grammy-winning drummer and singer Levon Helm of The Band, who died in April 2012. The road runs from Hurly to Woodstock, where he hosted his Midnight Ramble concerts at his home and studio. The name change may not show up on maps right away.

NORTH CAROLINA

There are 3,500 fewer parking spaces available this summer at Charlotte Douglas International Airport. The airport has torn down two short term parking decks to make way for a new hourly parking deck set to open in November 2014.

NORTH DAKOTA

The state Department of transportation plans its largest road construction program in state history, promoted in part by increased traffic related to the oil boom. The department's 2013 construction program will feature 327 projects worth about \$878 million.

OHIO

The Turnpike commission is expected to approve 2.7% -a-year toll increases at its July meeting to back \$1 billion in bonds expected to be issued in August to pay for road projects. The bond issue will include \$70 million towards replacement of the 60-year-old concrete base.

Four of six village council members of Elmwood Place have resigned over speed cameras. The council is getting outside advice on how to proceed, as it is unclear whether it can pass legislation with only two members.

Are you one?? The Cuyahoga County Clerk's office said it owes \$10 to \$1,000 to tens of thousands of people, totaling \$25 million, because of an error involving refundable court fees and bond payments in cases dating to the 1980s.

OREGON

The city of Salem has begun collecting on 20-year old unpaid traffic tickets, surprising some people who say they paid them but no longer have the receipt, the Statesman Journal reports.

Polk County will power it's police cars with propane, the Statesman Journal reports. The move will save the county about \$20,000 per year on fuel costs.

PENNSYLVANIA

Gov. Corbett has signed a bill that will begin dismantling the scandal-ridden Philadelphia Traffic Court. Federal authorities charged nine current or former judges with fixing tickets as political favors.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Major bridge and road projects could be funded statewide under a road plan approved by the state Senate that could spend \$500 million on the state's crumbling infrastructure.

SOUTH DAKOTA

The Deadwood City Commission has voted to create some free parking for visitors and residents during the summer months. The vote came after the town's business leaders said they would cover any loss from the 90-day trail.

TENNESSEE

The 2012 Urban Mobility Report issued by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute shows congestion in the Nashville area has nearly doubled over the past three decades. The report estimates that congestion in 2011 cost commuters \$801 million in lost time and extra fuel. Planners say more than 1 million vehicles pass through each of the city's busiest intersection daily. In the next 20 years that figure could expand by 15%.

TEXAS

Pink camouflage license plates that partly benefit veterans are now available in the state. MYplate.com says 10% of the sales through its website will go toward Carry the Load, a non profit unit that supports military members and their families. A green camouflage plate was released in May.

WASHINGTON

About 20,000 state residents use alcohol-sensing devices in their motor vehicles. The Seattle times reported that puts the state among the top five for use of the DUI-prevention devices.

VERMONT

Starting this fall, people who drive electric vehicles should be able to travel the 138-mile route between Burlington and Montreal without worrying they'll run short of a charge thanks to a planned electric charging corridor, Gov. Shumlin and Quebec Premier Pauline Marois announced. Initially the corridor will have more than 20 charging stations along the route.

WEST VIRGINIA

Transportation officials are making plans for the expected rush of traffic near Beckley during the 10-day National Boy Scout Jamboree July 15-24. The state plans to use the National Guard.

WHAATS UP HERE AND THERE

WAS THIS REALLY NECESSARY? We can't say Merry Christmas??????

Texas Gov. Perry has signed the "Merry Christmas bill," which removes legal risks of saying "Merry Christmas" in schools and protects traditional holiday symbols as long as more than one religious and secular symbol are also reflected.

Bicyclists in Portland Oregon could face a new tax when they go to buy a new set of wheels. A committee of the City Club of Portland proposes a 4% excise tax on new bicycles in a city that regularly ranks among the most bike-friendly in the country. The Oregonian reports the revenue would go to bicycle safety programs at schools.

Citi Bike, the nation's largest bike sharing program opened their program in New York City on June 2nd. As of June 10th, almost 37,000 people have signed up for annual memberships. The program has 6,000 bicycles available. The fee \$95 per year, \$25 for seven days or \$9.95 for 24 hours beat most private bicycle rentals.

New Jersey Transit's board has approved a proposal that would give rail travelers wireless Internet access in stations, on platforms and aboard all trains by the end of 2016.

Larry Becker
June 26, 2013

