

# OLD CARS AND NEW LAWS PLUS WHATS UP HERE AND THERE



*By Larry Becker*

*In a proposal to Congress last month, the U.S. Dept. of Transportation suggested allowing states to turn interstate freeways into tollways. Cash strapped states with aging highways could use the toll revenue to repair and update these highways. DOT also proposes allowing toll revenue to be used to improve mass transit near the toll roads. This is only a proposal and politically it is dangerous as neither party wants to be responsible for the tolls.*

*The top 9 cities that have drivers with road-rage areas follows: #1- New York City, #2- Dallas/Fort Worth, #3-Detroit, #4-Atlanta, #5- Minneapolis/St Paul, #6-Phoenix, #7-Miami, #8-Cincinnati and #9-San Diego. The city with nicest drivers is Portland, Oregon.*

*Buyers are warned about flood damaged vehicles coming out of several states that had major storm damage and being offered for sale in other states without disclosing the fact that they are from the flood damaged states.*

*How high is too high to drive? The states all have various rules related to marijuana and driving and how stoned is too stoned to drive? While police can use breathalyzers to measure the amount of alcohol in the bloodstream, the best way to determine marijuana intoxication is by*

*examining a blood sample. Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court complicated the situation for states by ruling that police must get a warrant before testing blood for a DUI. In February, researchers from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health reported that fatal crashes involving marijuana use had tripled over the past decade, with one of every 9 drivers now involved in a deadly accident tested positive for pot. (Information from article by Ron Hotakainen of McClatchy Newspaper's Washington's Bureau).*

*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 legislatures.*

## **ARIZONA**

*Free shuttle transportation between the Grand Canyon and the neighboring town of Tusayan began on May 10<sup>th</sup>. The buses will run every 20 minutes from 8 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. through Sept. The shuttle service is seen as a way to cut down on traffic congestion inside the national park. The shuttle service had 89,000 riders last year.*

## **CALIFORNIA**

*Legislation requiring car manufactures to open access to the data streaming out of computerized cars has stalled in committee.*

*The Feds have rejected California's design for driver's license for undocumented immigrants. The feds say that California's design falls short of security standards and does not meet guidelines intended to guard against counterfeit or fraudulent documents.*

*The anchor rods that hold in place strands of the main cable of the \$6.5 billion San Francisco-Oakland Bridge have a new problem: they are skewed off-center inside holes of the steel plate to which they are secured. Of the 274 rods in anchorage chambers at the eastern end of the suspension span, 205 are less than the required 10 millimeters from the inner surface of the holes through which they pass, according to bridge officials.*

*A section of Lombard Street in San Francisco, known as the crookedest Street in the world, will be closed to traffic this summer. It will be closed for 4 consecutive weekends starting in late June and including the Fourth of July weekend during the busiest summer tourism season. The vehicle closure does not apply to residents who live in the area.*

*A new carpool lane has opened on I-405 in Los Angeles. The long awaited stretch between Interstate 10 and highway 101 opened on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. The full carpool route runs for 70 miles from southern Orange County into the San Fernando Valley.*

*Golden Gate Bridge officials have set a date for the installation of a moveable medium separating northbound traffic and south bound traffic. The bridge is scheduled to close after midnight on Sat Jan.10<sup>th</sup>, and reopen before 4 a.m. on Monday, Jan.12<sup>th</sup> in time for the work week. The \$30 million project has been in the works for more than a decade.*

*A multi-billion dollar renovation of LAX's terminals will create more traffic problems for motorists.*

*Off-roaders are hitting the dirt again on 40,000 acres that had been closed for 14 years to protect an endangered plant. In April, a federal judge shrank the amount of habitat deemed necessary for the survival of the Peirson's milk vetch, a perennial.*

## **CONNECTICUT**

*The state Dept, of Transportation says it will cost up to \$250 million to put a multiuse trail along the side of the Merritt Parkway between Stratford and Greenwich, the Connecticut Post reports.*

## **FLORIDA**

*The Public Transportation Commission said area drivers for the ride-share services, Lyft and Uber will be ticketed for lack of required permits. Fines can reach \$800, including a \$500 fine for operating without a certificate. The two San Francisco based companies operate*

*through an app in which customers request a ride and pay electronically.*

*A bill to raise the speed limit on interstates and limited access highways from 70 to 75 mph has been sent to the Governor. It also increases the speed limit from 65 to 70 mph on rural four-lane divided highways and up to 65 mph on other roads.*

## **HAWAII**

*As of May 1<sup>st</sup>, residents now have to have two documents showing proof of residence to obtain a state driver's license. Documents include current valid Hawaii driver's license, vehicle registration and voter registration cards.*

## **IOWA**

*Iowa's preliminary five-year highway spending plan includes \$900 million for state owned bridges and more than \$1.2 billion for enhanced safety features and updates on state highways.*

## **LOUISIANA**

*State officials say the Fort Buhlow Bridge connecting Alexandria and Pineville will not be finished this year as had been planned. It is now projected to be finished in 2016.*

## **MAINE**

*Maine Turnpike officials say some drivers who use electronic E-ZPass transponders may have been overcharged. The problem was caused by a damaged road sensor on a ramp at the Kennebunk toll plaza that counts the number of axles per vehicle.*

*The city of Portland is owed more than \$3.7 million in unpaid parking tickets at a time when it is considering raising property taxes to boost the budget. The city's power to collect on those unpaid tickets is limited. Vehicles can't be booted or towed until it has three unpaid tickets.*

*On May 27<sup>th</sup>, Maine's Transportation Commissioner, Dave Bernhardt, announced that the speed limit on portions of the state's interstate highways, I-295, I-95, I-395 and U.S. 1 was raised from 65 mph to 70 mph. State highway workers are in the process of posting signs about the new limit.*

## **MASSACHUSETTS**

*The MBTA is testing out new barriers to protect bus drivers from abusive riders. The protective partition is made of metal.*

## **MICHIGAN**

*Ground has been broken for the 32-acre Michigan Mobility Transportation Center, a testing site for driverless cars that will simulate a city area. GM, Ford and Toyota are joining the University of Michigan in the \$6 million project near Ann Arbor.*

## **MINNESOTA**

*Stearns County commissioners have approved the use of lower-traffic county roads by golf-cart drivers. Three cities in Stearns County, St. Joseph, Albany and Melrose, allow the golf carts on city streets, but until now, they have been prohibited on county roads.*

## **MONTANA**

*U.S. Highway 287 from Helena to its intersection with U.S. Highway 191 north of West Yellowstone has been designated as the state's POW/MIA Memorial Highway. Black flags honoring the 55 Montanans still classified as Prisoners of War or Missing In Action were attached to light poles*

## **NEW HAMPSHIRE**

*Don't go hiking without one! The state Senate has voted to create a program to sell "hike safe" to hikers that would forgive them for any rescue expense's they'd otherwise owe New Hampshire if they were*

*negligent.. The bill authorizes the state to sell voluntary hike safe cards for \$25 per person and \$35 per family.*

## **NEW MEXICO**

*State Park Division Director Tommy Mutz said that the main entry point to Bottomless Lake State Park on Hwy409 has been shut down. He said the closure is for the foreseeable future.*

## **NORTH CAROLINA**

*The DMV is discounting mobile unit visits to coastal-area towns because of the small number of transactions and high cost of doing business.*

## **RHODE ISLAND**

*A new place to visit! An antique car museum in Newport has gotten the OK to open there. The museum will be on Bellevue Avenue near the International Tennis hall of Fame.*

## **UTAH**

*Utah drivers caught fiddling with their phones while on the road could soon face a \$100 fine. A state ban started May13th forbids anyone behind the wheel from tapping out numbers or other information on the devices. But using them to search for directions is still allowed.*

## **VERMONT**

*Vermont's Secretary of Transportation has asked her staff to re-evaluate whether the state could impose interstate tolls. Sue Minter told Vermont Public Radio a new electronic tolling system could be put in place without a lot of expensive personnel costs.*

## **VIRGINIA**

*The DMV has added American Sign Language to its new automated testing system, called SecuriTest.*

*The city of St. Albans is trying to find a way to preserve the longest continually operating gas station in the state. The Clarence Brown gas station was built in 1932.*

## **WASHINGTON**

*The unsuccessful project to build a new interstate 5 bridge across the Columbia River officially ended in May. Nearly \$200 million was spent on plans for a \$2.9 billion bridge with light rail to connect Portland, Ore., and Vancouver.*

## **WYOMING**

*Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks require separate permits for non-motorized boats. In previous years, each park honored the other's permits, even though a Yellowstone permit cost \$10 a season while Grand Teton charged \$20.*

# **WHAT'SUUP HERE AND THERE**

*The Maryland Dept. of Transportation said \$10 million in grants have been awarded to all 23 counties and Baltimore city to fix potholes and repair roads.*

*A new analysis by the American Road and Transportation Builders Association warns that there are 63,000 bridges in the U.S. that desperately need repair. Nearly one-tenth of the 607,380 bridges in the National Bridge inventory are rated as structurally deficient by the Federal Highway Administration, the average of these bridges is 42 years. The structurally deficient bridge may not be unsafe, but these bridges typically require significant maintenance and repairs to remain open. It is estimated that the nation would have to spend about \$20.5 billion a year until 2028 in order to eliminate the backlog of needed repairs.*

*Who pays for the roads? States that pay the biggest share of the local road network are West Virginia – 89 % and Delaware with 84%. The states that pay the least are New Jersey – 6% and Kansas with 7%. The U.S. average is 19%.*

*According to a new AAA report, the average cost to own and operate a sedan decreased 2.7% last year compared with the previous year, dropping 1.64 cents to 59.2 cents per mile, or \$8,876 a year, based on 15,000 miles of annual driving.*

*A Harris Poll of 2,234 adult drivers surveyed on line March 12-17 found two bad habits that bothered men and women drivers the most are: Tailgating 46% men and 58% of women and slow driving in the passing lane – men 56% and 42% for women.*

*Trucking companies and their drivers are not happy about new federal rules that took effect last July. The new rules cut the drivers maximum workweek from 82 hours to 70 hours and require a 30-minute break in the first 8 hours of a shift. The changes also toughened a required 34-hour break between workweeks.*

*Larry Becker*

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