

OLD CARS AND NEW LAWS

PLUS WHAATSUUP HERE AND THERE



by Larry Becker

The vast majority of states do not have rules at all related to self driving cars. The few states that do, have passed laws primarily to allow research and testing. Only New York specifically requires that drivers keep a hand on the wheel, but dates to a law from 1967. Car manufacturers see hands-free driving technology as the natural next step in driving – an evolution that has gone from cruise control, antilock brakes to electronic stability control. None of these innovations required permission from regulators. Legal experts say the automaker’s position concerning self driving cars is most likely correct – that in the absence of specific laws against it, hands free driving is legal. But that does not that necessarily mean drivers will not face scrutiny.

On May 5th, Daimler Trucks North America, showed off a self-driving big rig (truck) on the road atop Hoover Dam (Las Vegas, NV area) although in this case it had a driver with his hands on the wheel the whole time. But it will be years before an autonomous truck hits the highway for anything more than tests and demonstrations, the company says.

On May 10th, Google said its self-driving cars have been involved in 11 accidents over six years. Google says there were no injuries and occurred during a period both when the car was driving its self or when the person behind the wheel had taken over. Google released the information after an article by Chris Urmson of the Associated Press

reported that 4 self-driving cars have been involved in accidents in California since September. Google reports the accidents as minor over 1.7 million miles of driving.

According to CBS News, the average new car sold for \$36,500 in April.

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.



ALASKA

The Alaska Marine Highway ferry Taku will be out of service from July to September, peak travel and tourism season, due to maintenance delays. Originally, the work was supposed to be done by July 1st.

ALABAMA

New traffic signals that flash a yellow arrow for left turns are showing up on some roads, AL.com reports. The state Dept. of Transportation said a federal study concluded the flashing yellow arrow was easier for drivers to understand.

ARIZONA

The state's Energy Efficient Plate Program for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles has reached its maximum limit of 10,000 vehicles, the Dept. of Transportation reports. Plate issuance has been suspended until further notice.

Driver's licenses are available at four new privately owned businesses as part of an effort by the Dept. of Transportation to privatize some of its services. The total number of third-party locations is 14 and DOT anticipates having 23 by January.

The state Dept. of Transportation has started flashing "double check" warnings on freeway message boards and the Dept. of Child Safety is

getting out the word for parents not to leave their children unattended in hot cars. Since 1998, 29 children in the state have died this way.

CALIFORNIA

California is one of the states that have extra fees tacked onto routine traffic citations. If the offender fails to pay in full on time, for any reason, the fee only increases again, but the person's drivers license is immediately suspended. A \$100 ticket for a minor violation automatically becomes a \$490 fine thanks to fees and surcharges tacked on by the state and local governments. If the offender misses just one court date, that fine could increase to \$815, and the driver would lose his or her driver's license.

SB 530 would allow bicycle riders using brew bikes (usually 10 to 15 people on a bike touring small beer makers) to crack open a cold one if their city permits it, a safety monitor comes along for the ride and the driver gets some alcohol related training.

A proposal to enact a miles-driven tax is being considered. The test program would use volunteer drivers beginning in 2017.

Various proposed roadside tests for illegal drug use while driving is being considered by the legislature.

S.F. Mayor Ed Lee has proposed to tear down part of Interstate 280 in the Mission District neighborhood and reroute Cal-train through a new underground tunnel in a project that would open up a whole new area of the city to redevelopment.

Legislation to require manufacturers of designated consumer products, including automotive products, to post ingredients on the product label and on-line at the manufacture's website, has been approved by the Assembly Business and Professions Committee.

COLORADO

The 12-block town of Mountain View, near Denver, has 10 police officers and gets nearly 50% of its annual revenue from traffic tickets.

FLORIDA

A bill to create a tax on miles driven died when the legislature adjourned for the year. It “may” be reintroduced next year.

GEORGIA

Gov. Deal has signed a \$1 billion transportation bill that goes into effect July 1st. The bill raised the gas tax for the average driver by 6 cents a gallon, and imposes a \$5 a-night fee on hotel stays.

HAWAII

Plans to widen the highway from Kona International Airport to Kealakehe Parkway will include \$800,000 in mitigation funds to study Native Hawaiian archaeology and anthropology.

Legislation to repeal the requirement that gasoline offered for sale in the state contain a percentage of ethanol has been approved by a conference committee of members from the House & Senate. The committee’s bill sets an effective date of 12/31/2015. The bill has been returned to both chambers for a final vote. It mid- May, the bill was approved, and sent to the Governor who signed it into law.

IDAHO

Legislation that would increase vehicle registration fees for all types of vehicles by \$21 has been signed into law by Gov. Butch Otter.

According to the Idaho Journal, Idaho is the cheapest state in the nation to buy car insurance for a high-risk driver.

ILLINOIS

A Chicago Tribune investigation has found that 84% of roadside sobriety checks were in areas populated mostly by minorities while roadways in areas with more DUI – related crashes that that are predominantly white are checked less often, or not at all.

The state has spent nearly \$1 million to install electric vehicle recharging stations along the iconic Route 66 from Chicago to St Louis and will be completed by this summer.

INDIANA

The upcoming Interstate 65 construction project drew its share of criticism at a public meeting April 28th. The residents are concerned about the construction noise as well as the fact noise barriers will not be built until fall.

IOWA

The Iowa Dept. of transportation has told cities to turn off their highway traffic cameras that issue tickets to speeders caught on camera. DOT officials said the cameras are not making highways safer, according to the Des Moines Register.

KENTUCKY

State Attorney General Jack Conway has announced that he is suing Marathon Petroleum over gas prices.

MAINE

Authorities want to crack down on out-of-state drivers who blow through Maine Turnpike toll plazas without paying tolls.

Legislation to amend the law regarding ethanol based gasoline was not approved by the joint Environmental Natural Resources Committee.

MARYLAND

Compromise legislation to allow the issuance of a single license plate for historic vehicles and street rods has been approved and sent to the Governor for his signature and enactment into law. Under the compromise, historic vehicles and street rods that are 50 years old and

older would be eligible to run with a single plate. The bill was approved and signed into law in early May.

A bill that would have increased the age requirement for vehicles eligible to be registered as historic vehicles died when the legislature adjourned for the year.

Tolls will decrease in seven different locations in the state effective July 1st. According to the state government, the toll rollback will save Maryland residents \$270 million over the next five years.

MICHIGAN

Voters have been asked to approve a tax increase that would generate \$1.2 billion a year more for roads. If the controversial Proposition 1 constitutional passes, Michigan's 6% sales tax would increase to 7%.

NEVADA

A state Senator is sponsoring a bill to raise Nevada's speed limit to 80 mph told a legislative committee the higher speed limit would make state highways safer.

A bill to allow motorists to show proof of insurance via a smart phone photo or app during a traffic stop has passed in the Assembly, but faces opposition in the Senate. Senators from both parties have raised concern that police officers would be able to access personal information from the smart phone when they take it back to their patrol cars while writing traffic citations.

NEW JERSEY

The New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Highway are using new technology made by IBM which makes it easier for controllers to keep drivers informed about traffic and accidents. It prevents backups and secondary accidents caused by stalled traffic.

A bill to provide window stickers for exempt inspection vehicles has been approved by the Senate Transportation committee.

NEW MEXICO

A woman has filed a motion alleging that Rio Rancho is violating the First Amendment rights of drivers by pulling them over for flashing their headlights or honking their horns.

Police in Albuquerque have blocked off downtown Central Ave. after complaints from residents about noisy behavior from cruisers in the area. (Must be that rowdy CHVA bunch)

NORTH CAROLINA

The City Council of Charlotte is debating whether to fund a \$700,000 state study to determine if traffic lights would relieve congestion on interstates.

NORTH DAKOTA

A new bill that makes major changes to the state's modified vehicle law and extends the law to all registered vehicles in the state has been approved and signed into law. The new law extends the law to all registered vehicles in the state and makes it easier to register vehicles that are modified.

OKLAHOMA

A man denied a personalized license plate supporting the LGBT community has asked a judge to force a state agency to fulfill his open records request that he said were ignored.

OREGON

A 5-mile stretch of highway near Walton has seen an estimated 100 crashes from 2009 to July 2014 is getting guardrails, reflectors and rumble strips.

The fee to visit Crater Lake, Oregon's only national park, are going up to \$15 per vehicle in May and \$20 in 2017.

The state Legislature may let people driving through rural areas pump their own gas. Oregon and New Jersey are the only states that ban self-serve gas pumps.

TENNESSEE

Legislation to extend the emissions inspection exemption for new cars was pending in the Senate when it adjourned for the year. The bill had been approved by various Senate committees and is eligible to be considered in 2016. A similar House bill is also eligible to be considered in 2016. Under the bills, all vehicles three years old and newer would be excused regardless of mileage.

TEXAS

The Senate has passed a bill that would put an end to red-light cameras in Dallas and other cities. Sen. Bob Hall said data shows the cameras don't make intersections safer, but officials in several cities disagree.

VERMONT

Legislation that would ease the burden on hobbyists by requiring the Commissioner of DMV, upon the owner's request, to issue a title for vehicles not currently registered to be titled under Vermont law was amended and approved by the Vermont House. The bill was sent back to the Senate for concurrence with amendments. The amended legislation applies to vehicles 25 years old and older.

VIRGINIA

The American Civil Liberties Union is suing Fairfax County police over their policy of storing data collected through license plate readers, calling it illegal invasion privacy. State police stopped collecting the data in 2013.

WASHINGTON

A bill to allow the state DMV to issue, at the vehicle owner's option, to issue a single license plate, died when the legislature adjourned for the year.

WISCONSIN

The state Senate has voted 76-22 to raise the speed limit to 70 mph on roads where the Dept. of Transportation decides the higher speed would be appropriate. The bill now goes back to the Assembly, which approved it in March.

Clark County Sheriff Greg Herrick is being criticized for refusing to enforce laws that limit the weight of equipment farmers can drive on county roads. Herrick, who is also a farmer, says the penalties for violating the road laws are unconstitutional.

WHAT'S UP HERE AND THERE

Are you a talker? People who talk on cellphones while walking - 36% have had someone walk into them, and 23% have walked into someone or something.

New smoking restrictions on Ocean City beaches and the Boardwalk began on May 1st.

The deputy director of Honolulu's Dept. of Transportation said more people have been riding bicycles since December when the city opened a 2-mile protected bike lane on South King Street.

The average garbage truck uses about 300 horsepower, but one service (Middlebury, Vermont) is getting the job done the old fashioned way,

two horsepower. Twice a week, draft horses haul a cart as they clip-clop through neighborhoods, while Patrick Palmer and his two employees toss garbage bags and recycling left at the curb, onto the cart.

A recent survey states that the average driver spends 5 years of their life behind the wheel.

Plans to build a \$19.5 million Route 66 Experience have been announced. A year of fund raising will lead to a ground-breaking next summer, with the museum opening in 2018 according to the Tulsa World newspaper.

Larry Becker

24 May 2015

