

OLDCARS AND NEW LAWS

PLUS WHAATSUUP HERE AND THERE



By Larry Becker

Gridlock in Congress about a highway bill that would keep money to the states for road and to plan for the long term, and they're increasingly relying on action closer to home to get projects done. Figures compiled by the Associated Press show the total amount of money available to states from the Federal Highway Trust Fund has declined 3.5% over a 5 year period ending in 2013. Touted as one of the first interstate highways, a 200-mile stretch of U.S. 70 between suburban St. Louis and Kansas City stands as a prime example of the challenges facing the nation's roads. Built in the 1950s and 60s with a 20-year life expectancy, the four lane highway is crumbling beneath its surface and clogged with traffic as it carries more than 30,000 vehicles a day on many of its rural stretches, requiring more frequent repaving. This is happening in other states also. There is less income from gas taxes as vehicles become more fuel efficient and less money from the federal government. About 20 percent of the nation's 900,000 miles of interstates and major roads are in need of resurfacing or reconstruction according to federal data analyzed by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association. States are considering tolls on some of their highways, a miles driven tax and or sales tax on fuel.

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

In a reversal, DMV has decided to let a University of Arizona graduate keep his personalized license plate that mocks Arizona State: LOLASU. Josh Miller had received notice in October that someone had filed a compliant.

CALIFORNIA

Most California drivers would pay an extra \$52 a year under a proposal by Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins to raise \$2 billion a year to fix the state's crumbling roads, bridges and highways. She did not spell out how the money would be collected. The fee of about a dollar a week could be charged as part of insurance plans and higher vehicle registration. The fee could be higher for trucks and for electric vehicle drivers who don't pay gas taxes. A California Dept. of Transportation review found 16 percent of the state's highway miles were in poor condition in 2013. We all know that the proposed one dollar a week fee will increase every year.

DMV officials say that 50,000 undocumented immigrants applied for California drivers licenses during January under a new law granting licenses to undocumented applicants.

Yosemite National Park has announced new fees starting 2015. The seven-day pass will rise from \$20 to \$25 or \$30, depending on the season. The higher rates will be between April and October.

Driving in California using your windshield wipers without your headlights on could cost you a \$230 traffic citation.

A bill recently introduced would require adult bicycle riders to wear helmets, the San Gabriel Valley Tribune reports.

CONNECTICUT

Gov. Malloy says he will accelerate the replacement of Waterbury's knot of highways known locally as the Mixmaster, The Republican-American reports.

Legislation has been introduced to lower the property on many older cars. Under the bill, the personal property tax on vehicles eight years old and older would be changed to a flat tax of \$100 per year for vehicles with an assessed value of less than \$10,000 and \$50 per year for vehicles 10 years old or older with an assessed value of \$8,000. Antique, rare and special interest vehicles may be negatively by the bill. These vehicles are currently valued at a \$500 assessment, which results in a reduced rate.

D.C. – WASHINGTON

Police have added a new word to the city's vocabulary, "puffer," a parked car with a plume of exhaust curling from its tailpipe, the Washington Post reports. The puff can attract "jump-in" robbers, who take it as a sign that the vehicle may be warming up, keys in the ignition, while the owner is indoors.

DELAWARE

State officials plan to boost the speed limit to 65 mph on Interstate 95 between the Maryland line and Interstate 495 split south of Wilmington, the News Journal reports.

Transportation officials plan to accelerate several major highway and transit projects, the News Journal reports.

Motorists in the state can now smile for the camera when having their driver's license photo taken, thanks to a change at the state's DMV divisions, the News Journal reports. Smiles had been prohibited for about five years since the state adopted facial recognition technology to discourage theft, a DMV spokesman said.

Police will continue special-duty patrols for truckers dodging the tolls on Interstate 95 at the Maryland line through at least June, but the checks will be less frequent and more random, the News Journal reports.

IDAHO

A new National Rifle Association themed license plate could soon make an appearance on Idaho roads, two years after an earlier NRA design was discontinued due to poor sales, The Sportsman Review reports that the House Transportation Committee has approved the new design.

IOWA

The Des Moines metro area will need to spend \$10 million more per year just to maintain the existing pavement according to a report by the Des Moines Metro Area Planning Organization.

A new bill, supported by key lawmakers, would increase the state gasoline and diesel tax by 10 cents per gallon, the Des Moines Register reports.

Legislation has been introduced to provide for the issuance of a single license plate for motor vehicles originally manufactured with a front bumper 24 in. or less from the ground. Separate legislation would allow a single plate for vehicles originally manufactured without a bracket, device or other means to display and secure a plate on the front of the vehicle.

HAWAII

Legislation has been introduced to reduce the annual registration fees from \$45 to \$25. Separate legislation seeks to reduce the states vehicle weight tax by \$0.01 per pound and reduce the flat tax for vehicles who weigh more than 10,000 lbs from \$300 to \$150.

MINNESOTA

Gov. Dayton's plan for transportation would repair or replace 2,200 miles of state roads and 330 bridges but would come with a noticeable

cost to taxpayers. The plans depend on adding a new 6.5% tax on gas and higher vehicle registration fees.

Legislation to mandate payment of a “recoupment” surcharge up to \$95 has been introduced. The surcharge would be calculated to levy the highest tax on owners of most fuel-efficient vehicles. Separate legislation requires the Dept. of transportation to take steps to implement a vehicle mileage user fee to tax drivers on actual miles driven.

MISSOURI

The Columbia City Council has approved new regulations for ride-booking services such as Uber and Lyft, the Columbia Daily Tribune reports. The new regulations require ride-booking services to get business licenses and license their drivers as chauffeurs.

NEVADA

State officials have awarded \$83 million to a road construction company for the first phase of what will eventually be an interstate linking Las Vegas and Phoenix.

One or two? If your vehicle has two brackets, front & rear, two license plates are required, however if your vehicle only has one bracket (rear), only one license is required.

During the last week of February, Nevada Highway Patrol officers rode in the cabs of semi-trucks in the Las Vegas area. They observed many drivers not wearing seat belts and or using hand held cellphones, then related the information to officers in patrol cars who then stopped and cited the drivers.

A bill has been introduced that would repeal the law requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets.

NEW YORK

Legislation has been introduced to provide that historical vehicle owners only pay a one-time registration fee of \$100 upon on original

registration. The one-time fee would replace the current annual fee of \$28.75

Legislation to authorize the owner of a motor vehicle for a \$50 annual fee to display a single license plate on the rear of the vehicle has been introduced.

NORTH DAKOTA

Vehicle crossings have doubled since the 75 cent toll on the northside bridge that connects Fargo and Moorhead ended, KFGO-AM reports.

OREGON

Legislation to convert the state's current voluntary vehicles miles traveled (VMT) tax program to a mandatory program has been introduced. The mandatory program would apply to all high mileage vehicles that do not have a rating of 55 mpg or better. These high mileage vehicles would not pay the gas tax that would apply to all other vehicles. Under the bill, if a vehicle is subject to the mandatory VMT, owners would choose to pay a flat annual fee in lieu of a fee based on actual miles driven.

Legislation has been introduced to remove the requirement that all gasoline offered for sale in the state contain a percentage of ethanol. Currently, the state requires that a "retail dealer", nonretail dealer or wholesale dealer may not sell or offer for sale gasoline unless the gasoline contains 10% ethanol by volume. H.B. 2373 recognizes that while the current ethanol mandate does not apply to fuel used in antique, all-terrain and racing vehicles, there has been an inability to obtain unblended gasoline for engines that may be damaged by ethanol.

PENNSYLVANIA

Legislation has been introduced to extend the emissions inspection exemption for five years after the model year. Current law only exempts new vehicles that have less than 5,000 miles on their odometer for one year after their first registration.

TENNESSEE

Construction has started to fix and replace a 100-year old wooden bridge in East Tennessee. The state had ordered the bridge on Johnson Gap Road in Anderson County immediately closed in July 2013 because it was unsafe.

TEXAS

Drivers in San Antonio who are caught using their cellphones without a hands-free device will now be ticketed. Texas has no state law against using a cellphone while driving, but many local cities do.

The official vender for specialty license plates in Texas is in the process of formally notifying over fifty organizations that their plate design does not meet the state's minimum requirement of 200 plates actively in-use. Thee new requirements became effective Dec. 1, 2014. It does not impact the state's vanity and military plates, which not at risk of being removed. Vendor plates that do not meet the minimum of 200 plates actively in-use over a given year, are at risk of being permanently removed from the program.

A central Texas pilot program that cuts or eliminates tolls for people who are carpooling is expanding to all but one of the area's tollways, The Austin American-Statesman reports. The toll reimbursement program is through the carpooling app - Carma.

The price tag to complete Houston's Mayor, Anmse Parkers emergency pothole fix-it plan is bringing sticker shock to some City Council members. KHOU TV obtained an internal city e-mail at the Dept. of Public Works that calls for an additional \$29 million in funding for the city to catch up.

VERMONT

Legislation is being considered that would require the Commissioner of DMV, upon the owner's request, to issue titles for vehicles not currently

required to be titled under Vermont law. These vehicles would include those 15 years old or older.

VIRGINIA

The State Senate has approved a bill to exempt antique motor vehicles from the requirement that they have an exhaust system of a type installed as standard equipment, or comparable to that designed as factory equipment. The measure now goes to the House.

WASHINGTON

Drivers may arrive at Spokane International Airport with dirty cars, but they will depart with clean cars. A courtesy car wash is covered by the fee for parking in the two garages and one outside lot.

A member of the State Transportation Committee says opposition to studded tires is gaining traction. Joe Tortorelli says he supports a call to phase out studs to save millions on highway and street maintenance.

The State Transportation Dept. is suggesting the maximum daily rate could be \$10 for drivers with a "Good to GO" pass for drivers who want to drive in the express lane after toll lanes are installed on Interstate 405 between Bellvue and Lynnwood.

A bill has been introduced to allow the state to allow the issuance, at the option of the vehicle owner, of only a single rear-mounted license plate.

It has been illegal to text and drive in Washington state since 2007. A bill working its way through the legislature would expand the law to cover the use of all electronic devices and stiffen for offenders, KING-TV reports.

WESTVIRGINIA

A bill to increase property tax paid by owners of some antique motor vehicles has been introduced. Under the bill, each of these cars would have an assessed value of \$5,000 for purposes of the tax regardless of their actual value. This bill not only benefits antique vehicle owners

whose cars are worth more than \$5,000. It would penalize antique vehicle owners worth less than \$5,000.

A second bill has been introduced to provide owners of all motor vehicles registered in the state with an exemption from property taxes. The bill exempts motor vehicles from property tax for the tax year beginning after December 31, 2015, and is pending consideration in the House Roads and Transportation Committee.

WYOMING

State Senators have advanced a bill that would increase the speed limit to 70 mph on some Wyoming highways.

The state House has approved a bill to allow the state to issue a single rear-mounted license plate. The bill now goes to the Senate.

whatsup here and there

A driver in Atlanta was issued a citation for “eating while driving” on Jan. 10th. The citation, which the driver, Madison Turner, plans to contest during a court appearance, has renewed the debate about the extent to which states should regulate driving distractions that include the enduring, like music, and the contemporary, like tools for texting and navigation. When it began a safety campaign last winter, Kentucky State police said its troopers would be watching for both texting and eating. In Cobb County, where Turned was cited, authorities appear to be relying on a provision that gives officers latitude on defining “distracted driving”.

The Wall Street Journal reports that Apple has hired hundreds of people to work on a secret project – code name “Titan” – to develop an electric vehicle. The article says the vehicle will resemble a mini-van and would have the Apple brand. Apple denies that they are working on an electric vehicle

Ford is developing an electric vehicle that will travel up to 200 miles on a single charge.

Sony has reportedly joined the race to create the high tech car of the future. It has invested about \$842,000 in robotics ZMP for self-driving vehicle research according to Financial Times magazine.

TRIVA

The first official white House car was a 1909 White Steamer, ordered by President Taft. The 1924 Chrysler was the first to have a replaceable cartridge oil filter. The 1947 Packard's had electric seats as an option, the 1969 Cadillac was the first with a electric sun roof (as an option), the 1969 Pontiac was then first to have a radio antenna embedded in the windshield. The Acme Car Company of Redding Pa, had a perpetual guarantee on their vehicles, but they were only in business from 1904 until 1911. In 1949, a Dutch businessman, Ben Ponisr, had the first VW shipped to the U.S. which he sold, had another one shipped over and sold it too. The MG octagon shaped badge on the vehicle was based on founder, Cecil Kimber's, dinning table. MG stands for Morris Garages.

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25 Feb. 2015

