

OLD CARS AND NEW LAWS PLUS WHAT'S UP HERE AND THERE

By LARRY BECKER



Federal safety regulators, the insurance industry and a coalition of the world's largest automakers have announced an agreement on September 11th to make automatic emergency braking, a standard feature in future car models sold in the U.S. Such systems, which alert a driver to a potential forward collision and robotically triggers the brakes, have proved successful in reducing crashes, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, but they are typically an expensive option. Ten auto makers, Audi, BMW, Ford, General Motors, Mazda, Mercedes Benz, Tesla, Toyota, Volkswagen and Volvo will work with the National Traffic Safety Administration to develop a timeline for installing automatic braking as a standard in all vehicles they sell.

Speed limits! State (California) law requires cities to measure the speeds that drivers travel on certain –but notably not all – streets, and use the results to adjust speed limits. The streets where local officials are required to do “speed surveys” are known in the traffic engineer lingo as collectors and arterials. An arterial is a big street, typically four lanes. Collector streets are typically two-lane streets that take traffic from a residential area to an arterial. When traffic engineers do their surveys, they are told to disregard the speeds of the fastest 15% of drivers on that street during traffic-flow traffic conditions. That's because the law figures those people are driving too fast. The law says: look at the speed that drivers near the 85th percentile are going, and set the speed limit there. It is a speed that is considered reasonable, given what's actually happening each day on that street. City officials conducting speed surveys can round up or down in 5-mph increments. If crashes are up, cities likely add a traffic signal, warning sign or other traffic-calming devices to slow cars. Freeway speed limits are set by the state. (Above information from an article by Tony Bizjak of the Sacramento Bee newspaper).

Houston Texas is the most deadly city for red light runners, 181 fatalities from 2004 to 2013, according to the National Coalition for Safer Roads.

A Connecticut man was arrested for driving 112 m.p.h. His excuse, he was on his way to traffic court, where he was to address a speeding ticket. (I think that he lost his case).

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

A tour boat company based in British Columbia is considering running a weekly ferry service to Ketchikan starting next summer. It would be operated by Prince Rupert Adventure Tours. No start date has been announced.

ARKANSAS

The Highway and Transportation Department will have 27 road and bridge projects to go back up for bids in October. The projects are worth about \$411 million.

CALIFORNIA

On Wednesday, September 9th, Gov. Brown and legislative leaders abandoned an effort to require a 50 percent reduction in petroleum use in motor vehicles, S.B. 350. The bill would have raised the gas tax by 7 cents per gallon, and preserve the California Air resource Board existing power to make regulations that reduce emissions. On September 25th, CARB convened to consider renewing the state's low carbon fuel standards. It requires producers of gasoline and other transportation fuels to reduce the carbon intensity of their products by at least 10% by 2020, with a shifting focus to cleaner fuel.

San Francisco authorities are issuing more carpool violation tickets. The Oakland Tribune reports that state and Santa Clara County officials have surveyed motorists and found that an average of 41% of drivers on county's expressways cheated in the carpool lane at 28 locations the county monitored. The tickets cost \$491.

Gov. Brown has vetoed legislation to open Los Angeles-area carpool lanes to regular traffic at night. A.B. 210 would have limited controls on portions of the 134 and 210 freeways to heavy commute hours.

COLORADO

Colorado is converting a highway shoulder lane on a mountainous highway into a “ski lane,” an express lane for winter recreational travelers according to the State Dept. of Transportation. The 13-mile toll lane on Interstate 70 will be open just 72 days a year and cost from \$3 to \$30, depending on traffic.

GEORGIA

A group of undocumented immigrants has filed suit against the Dept. of Driver Services, accusing the state agency of violating their constitutional rights by denying them their driver’s licenses.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution warned readers that Old Alabama Road will be “hell on earth for a while”. A road widening project will mean lane closures and shifted traffic, and the project is not slated for completion until the end of 2016.

HAWAII

The Hawaii Dept. of Transportation has removed barriers blocking parking near a beach on Oahu’s North Shore, but parking is still not allowed.

There is a fundraiser underway in Hanapepe to save a 1955 Ford 150. The vehicle has been a fixture in the town since 1991.

IOWA

A 10-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax is boosting Iowa road construction funds and hasn’t dampened motorist’s enthusiasm for driving according to The Register newspaper.

KANSAS

Shawnee county officials have been working to make sure that state and federal officials are aware of efforts to replace a decaying bridge.

MAINE

The Maine DMV is discontinuing its mobile units in Wiscasset and York as part of a realignment of services.

MICHIGAN

Auto Nation, the country's largest auto retailer, said it will no longer sell new or used vehicles under recall that have not been repaired.

MISSISSIPPI

The Mississippi Highway Patrol issued 4,925 citations with 109 DUI arrests during Labor Day weekend. (Those boys don't mess around with drunk driver.

NEBRASKA

Driver instructors at the Metropolitan Community College in Omaha have announced the arrival of three new trucks, which will help students learn about driving a semi trailer.

NEVADA

The Nevada Highway Patrol has started to enforce the state's 'Three-Feet' law for bicyclists. Under the law, drivers must maintain a minimum distance of three feet from a rider.

AquaMetals, a California-based company, has broken ground on a \$30 million dollar battery recycling plant that federal officials say will be the first of its kind in the world. The plant will be built close to where Tesla Motors is building its electric battery factory near Reno.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

State residents are pushing officials to consider running ferry service, between Portsmouth and Cape Cod. No decision has been made on the proposal at this time.

NEW YORK

Drivers are going to wait a little longer before they can charge their electric vehicles on the New York State Thruway. Fast-charging stations at four travel plazas between Newburgh and Catskill that were initially slated for summer installation are now expected to come later this year.

OAKLAHMA

Traffic delays caused by trains passing through Claremore have hurt the city's economy. A study has determined that the gross product of the city was 2.6% below 2014 because of delays at train crossing. It was also a major complaint by tourists traveling in the area.

RHODE ISLAND

A new Rhode Island license design scheduled to begin this month, is being put on hold while a different design is being developed.

The Rhode Island Dept. of Transportation has found that 28 state ebridges had "critical findings," which will cost millions to fix.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Sitting Bull Crystal Caverns is scheduled to close and cease to be a tourist attraction according to the Rapid City Journal. The caves were operated by Heffron family, who estimate that more than a million people have visited the site.

WASHINGTON

A proposal to change current regulations to remove the 6 inch minimum height requirements for windshields and replace it with a vague standard and also lower the bumper heights, but the State Patrol opted to retain present requirements.

The states toll division's plan for carpool enforcement on the new I-405 express toll lanes will fail, a state troopers group warned. Enforcement is weak in a similar situation on Highway 167, The Seattle Times reports.

The Sound Transit Board (Seattle area) has approved a program to offer reserved parking permits to frequent riders at its busiest park-and-ride lots.

WYOMING

It will cost more to snowmobile in Yellowstone National Park with out a guide this winter according to the Jackson Hole News and Guide. Last winter it cost \$40 for a one-to-three-day permit that would allow private snowmobiles to travel in groups of up to 5

sleds and 10 people. This year, the cost is \$40 per day. There is also a \$25 entrance fee for each snowmobile.

WHAATSUUP HERE AND THERE

According to a survey by Hankook Tire Gauge Index, 1 in 3 American drivers typically speed when driving in a school zone.

Some groups are saying that Google’s self-driving cars are “too safe”. The vehicles are programmed to follow the “letter of the law” pertaining to vehicle laws. In 2009, a Google car could not get through a four-way stop because its sensors kept waiting for other (human) drivers to stop completely and let it go. The human drivers kept inching forward, looking for the advantage – paralyzing Google’s robot. In July, a Google car slowed as it approached to allow a pedestrian to use a cross walk, it was “rear-ended” by the vehicle behind it. These problems affect all self-driving cars, not just Google’s. Engineers and researchers are working on solving the problems.

Apple hopes to have its first electric car on the road brandishing the Cupertino, California companys famous logo by 2019.

In late August, Google began testing their driverless vehicles in the Austin, Texas area.

German auto maker, Porsche, plans to unveil a new 600 horsepower electric sports concept vehicle soon.

A proposal making its way through Congress, would allow drivers as young as 18 to drive commercial trucks across state lines. A federal ban has young drivers from crossing state lines while driving commercial trucks. State laws allow 18 year old drivers to get a commercial drivers license in most states but not drive across state lines.

Jaguar has lowered the price of their entry level compact XE sedan to \$35, 885. The company will also introduce a new vehicle, the F-Pace SUV. No price on the F-Pace has been announced.

The average 18 year old driver pays 18% more for auto insurance if they do not stay on their parent's policy.

Some auto analysts say that decreasing gas prices may slow the sales of electric vehicles.

Tesla says it plans to employ 6,500 people at a reported average wage of more than \$26 per hour during its first five years of operation when it opens its new battery plant near Reno, Nevada.

Since 2004, Lt. Salle Norris, has formulated and executed New York City's traffic plans for all of the visits by the presidents, United Nations officials, the Pope and many motorcades. She is called the "traffic Queen" by her fellow workers.

Great News!! Now you can finance your new vehicle purchase for 8 years. According to Experian, in the second quarter of the year nearly 29% of new car loans were financed for terms of 72 to 84 months, an increase of 20% over last year. The bad news: if you financed a \$29,000 car for 5 years, your payment was \$544.74, for 8 years, it was \$364.52, but after 5 years on an 8 year loan, you would still owe \$12,194 on a vehicle which has depreciated to \$10,000, a gap of \$1294. This is based on an interest rate of 4.81%, the national average, according to Time magazine.

On Sunday, September 27th, Paris France banned vehicles from the central part of the city for the day, allowing people to stroll, cycle or skate from the Arc de Triomphe to Place de la Bastille. Only emergency vehicles were allowed in the area.

Tesla has unveiled its new SUV, called the Model X. It goes from 0 to 60 mph in 32 seconds, and is the world's fastest SUV. If you would like to have one of the initial "signature" versions, it will only cost you a few dollars - \$132,000.

***Larry Becker
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