

OLD CARS AND NEW LAWS

PLUS WHAATSUUP HERE AND THERE



by Larry Becker

Please excuse any spelling or grammar errors as I am recovering from my second (and last I hope) eye surgery in six months.

There are many new state traffic laws in various states that take effect on Jan 1st. More information on the new laws as soon as more information is available.

There is little activity on new laws as most lawmakers were off for their Christmas Vacations. We can expect many new proposed laws when they return to “work” in January.

Is your state unfriendly to historic vehicles???

What are the best and worst states when it comes to the rights of historic vehicle enthusiasts? In the August 2011 edition of the HVA e-newsletter, readers were asked to tell Haggerty Insurance in an on-line survey.

While several responders bemoaned the lack of ethanol-free gas stations in their state of residence – a common problem nationwide – most gave high marks to their respective home states when it came to plate registration fees use restrictions. Oregon residents like their one-time \$60 license fee for vehicles over 25 years old. Oklahoma and Missouri responders like that they could still find ethanol-free, premium fuel at the pump. Despite a personal property tax (capped at \$500), several Connecticut residents praised “a registration system friendly to antique and classic cars” and no emission testing. Texas was voted the “most friendly” for its inexpensive registration fees and generally liberal use restrictions. Not surprising, California was voted “most unfriendly,” with complaints from the Golden State mostly centering around increased fees for historic vehicles license plates, mounting emission restrictions, and a general hostile political climate makes it feel – as one reader put it – “like the state would prefer just to scrap older cars” rather than preserve them.

(Information courtesy of Haggerty Insurance winter 2011 magazine)

On Dec. 13th, the National Transportation Safety Board announced that they are recommending a ban on cellphone use and texting while driving. This would include hands free devices. They are calling on all 50 states to ban the use and suggesting that it should be a federal regulation. There is much opposition to the proposal especially from the manufactures of these devices, and especially drivers who feel that they must have the devices. I do not know how they survived before cell phones were invented. The Board acknowledges that it will be difficult to get a total ban on the use of the devices. The use of the devices is the number 1 cause of accidents caused by distracted driving.

It has been almost 30 years since gasoline took such a big bite out of the family budget. The typical American household will have spent \$4,155 for gasoline in 2011 and that is a record. That is 8.4% of what the medium family takes in, the highest share since 1981. Gasoline averaged more than \$3.50 a gallon in 2011, another unfortunate record. It does not look like 2012 is likely to bring any relief.

(Information from article by Jonathan Fahey of the Associated Press)

ARIZONA

Officials at the Grand Canyon Park hope to ban the sale of disposable plastic water bottles by early 2012, but first they have to demonstrate they have met the National Park Service guidelines requiring a review of water availability, cost and benefits and get the regional director's OK.

ALABAMA

The Huntsville City Council is considering a police department proposal that would set \$150 as the maximum rate as the basic tow of a disabled vehicle. Chief Mark Hudson wants to stop what he calls "outrageous" fees charged by some towing companies.

CALIFORNIA

Motorists and merchants in Stockton are not happy with new parking meters. The old meters need to be replaced, but the present rate is 25 to 50 cents per hour. The new meters will have a rate of \$1 per hour. Merchants feel that it will affect downtown shopping. People who work in the downtown area now pay approx. two and a half dollars a day for parking, but with the new meters, it will go to \$8 per day. The new meters will be installed after Jan. 1st. The city expects that the new meters will generate an extra \$500,000 annual income to the city.

The DMV has added do-it-yourself kiosks in some field offices for people who do not do vehicle registration via the Internet and don't want to stand in line. The touch-screen monitor is like an ATM and accepts cash, credit cards and debt cards. It scans the bar code on the renewal notice. Who uses it? One group, we're told, is people who don't have bank accounts.

AAA has offered free DMV registration services to their members in several of their office. Now, they will begin charging a small fee (\$3 to \$6) for these services.

There is a proposal to build a "toll road" connecting I-5 with U.S. 50 near Sacramento. The 33-mile road would loop from Interstate 5 south of Sacramento to the planned Silva Valley interchange on Hwy. 50 in El Dorado County. The project is a cooperative effort by El Dorado County, Sacramento County, Folsom, Rancho Cordova and Elk Grove. The cost of the project may be as high as \$650 million. Several ways to fund the project are being explored.

COLORADO

A federal Appeals court in Denver has upheld a rule prohibiting roads on nearly 50 million acres of land in national forests across the U.S. , a ruling hailed by environmentalists as one the most significant in decades. Mining and energy companies, however, say it could limit development of natural resources such as coal, oil and natural gas.

The city of Breckenridge will be turning off some street- lights soon to save money. The Summit Daily newspaper said the plan is expected to save enough energy to light five houses for a year. Some residents oppose the plan as they say that it will result in an increase in crime and will make it unsafe for drivers at night.

WASHINGTON – D.C.

The City Council approved a bill that would create a debt-collection office to go after tens of millions of dollars in outstanding parking tickets to people who live in neighboring Virginia and Maryland, the Washington Post reported. The Central Collection Unit could go to another jurisdiction, get a judgment, which could lead to a lien on a person's property.

Metro riders may see a fare increase in 2012 as the transit authority faces a projected \$124 million shortfall, the Washington Post reported. The preliminary operating budget for fiscal 2013, which started July 1st, estimated that revenues will drop \$3 million to \$809 million and expenses will rise \$121 million to \$1.5 billion.

The Taxicab Commission approved a proposal to increase cab fare and to introduce a credit-card payment option by fall 2012. Under the proposal, the base fare would remain at \$3, but the per-mile rate goes from \$1.50 to \$2.16, and the wait-time fare would increase from \$15 to \$25 per hour.

FLORIDA

The Third district Court of Appeals has upheld the rights of cities to use cameras to catch motorists who run red lights. The ruling affects only about two dozen cities that had red-light camera ordinances in place before July 20th, 2010. That's when a state law went into effect allowing all cities to use cameras.

MAINE

On Dec. 7th, the northbound on-ramp (Fairfield) that leads to Interstate 95 was closed and will remain closed for two and a half years. Reconstruction of the Clinton Clauson Bridge between Fairfield and

Benton began on Oct. The \$9.3 million project involves replacing bridge decks on I-95 and the deck of a smaller bridge that spans the Pam Am Railway track.

MARYLAND

A \$3.5 million bike path will connect the Inner Harbor and Penn Station (Baltimore) in about 16 months and will fill in a missing link on the city's portion of the East Coast Greenway, a 2,800-mile network of paths from Florida to Maine.

MASSACHUSETTS

The state legislation is still considering issuing so called "baby Boomer" license plates. These plates would be available to vehicle owners born between 1946 and 1964. Money generated from these plates would go towards funding programs for older adults. Massachusetts has a number of specialty plates that benefit causes as diverse as cancer research to economic development says state Rep. Sara Peake, D, a boomer born in 1957 who sponsored the bill, "The Cape (Cod)" and islands plates that generate over \$1 million annually.

MICHIGAN

The state Department of Transportation announced in late November that snowplows in it's nine county Southwest Region will be dropping salt at 25 mph instead of speeds of 35 to 45 mph. The move is expected to save more than \$100,000 in salt costs. Regional Maintenance Superintendent Rich Hassenzahl said more salt should remain on roadways if it's dropped at slower speeds.

The city of Detroit has announced that it is ending its practice of providing free police escorts for funeral processions, citing a budget crunch and shortage of officers. Chief Ralph Godbee said police escorts could continue if the fees are paid as part of the cost of the funeral.

MONTANA

A ban on using handheld cellphones and other electronic devices while driving in Helena took effect on Dec. 7th, but police gave driver's a warning for 30 days. Violators face up to a \$100 fine.

NEW HAMSHIRE

The 88-year old Memorial Bridge) that spans the Piscataqua River from Portsmouth to Kiittery, Maine, will close to pedestrian and bicycle traffic between Jan. 3rd and Jan. 16th. Free hourly shuttle service will be provided for pedestrians and cyclists until the replacement bridge is completed in 2012.

NEW JERSEY

Toll cheating is down on the Golden Gate Parkway and more motorists are opening E-Pass accounts in the first month since cameras were mounted in exact change lanes, Turnpike Authority executive director Veronique Hakim said. Officials estimated \$16 million was lost to exact change cheaters last year.

NEW YORK

The sidewalks of New York City are becoming more crowded. The city started gauging foot traffic at 50 intersections five years ago. The "pedestrian volume index" has climbed steadily. One study found 350,000

pedestrians a day in Times Square. The Transportation Dept. has been widening sidewalks and expanding pedestrian malls.

Two years behind schedule and \$78 million over budget, reconstruction of Interstate 287 in suburban New York City is a prime example of a troubled road project. Rebuilding of the highway linking New York City to New England has cost the taxpayers \$621 million, or \$72 million per mile – double the rate of similar work in the Northeast, an investigation by the Journal News in Westchester County, N.Y. found. This is due to design errors and planning lapses driving the cost up by more than 14%.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Dept. of Motor Vehicles Executive Director Kevin Shwedo said he has a list of 150 things that should be changed at the DMV after visiting all 68 offices. He is beginning training for DMV managers and employees.

The Hilton Head Island Town Council's Public Safety Committee voted to have the Town Council ask the state to increase the speed limit on the Charles Frasier Bridge from 40 to 45 mph. Traffic engineer Darin Shokemaker said for some islanders the speed is too low and it's a speed trap for visitors when it is enforced.

TENNESSEE

Motorists in Chattanooga now have access to the SmartWay traffic information system. The Transportation Management Center at the Enterprise South Industrial Park monitors 71 cameras along Chattanooga's most heavily traveled corridors. Operators use the information to put advisories on 16 electronic message boards and on AM radio.

VIRGINIA

Northern Virginia commuters can now count the minutes while they sit in traffic on Interstate 95 between Fredericksburg and Washington D.C. State Department of Transportation signs will display estimated travel times, giving motorists a heads up on what lies ahead or the option to seek alternate routes.

The Greater Lynchburg Transit's board of directors has voted to eliminate all Sunday service, and reduce service on Saturday's and weekdays beginning in January 2012. The board also approved reducing the monthly bus pass fare from \$60 to \$50.

WASHINGTON

After a long delay, tolling on the Hwy. 520 floating bridge began at 5 a.m. on Dec. 29th. The state Transportation Dept. will be using the tolls to help pay for a new 6-lane floating bridge on Lake Washington that will cost more than \$4 billion. The Seattle-Bellevue Bridge carries about 500,000 vehicles a day.

WEST VIRGINIA

Parking garage construction at Marshall University will both bring sorely needed spaces and take away access to two surface lots. The \$7 million garage will have at least 450 spaces. Two lots, next to Joan C., Edwards Performing Arts Center, will be closed during construction. The smaller, metered lot, will remain open after the garage is completed.

The voters (of Charleston) has voted against a proposal to install decorative lights on the New River Gorge Bridge. More than 76% of those responding to an on-line proposal opposed the idea. Transportation Secretary Paul Mattox had said lighting the bridge would enhance its popularity, but the citizens said no.

WHAATSUUP HERE AND THERE

Auto repair shops are stepping up their efforts against insurance companies, which argue they are controlling their prices by steering customers toward preferred businesses that do their bidding. At issue is who gets to decide prices for auto body repair – shops or insurance companies. Laws and prices vary by state, but repair shops if they don't charge what insurance companies decide are fair prices, they lose business, sometimes to shops that use substandard parts. Insurance companies counter that they deal with thousands vehicle repair shops each year and figure out who can do the best work for the lowest cost. That, they say, saves money for the consumer. Many consumers disagree with the insurance company's point of view.

The USA is getting riskier for people on foot, and experts aren't sure why. New data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration show that pedestrian fatalities rose 4.2% in 2010 over the previous year. The number of pedestrians injured in motor vehicle crashes soared 19%, to 70,000. Experts are puzzled by the increase, which comes as road fatalities, in most categories are dropping. The raise follows four straight years of falling pedestrian deaths, and a 14% decrease in pedestrian fatalities from 2000 to 2009.

A USATODAY analysis of data from the Federal Highway Administration has found that rising gas prices have forced many drivers to drive less and use public transportation more. The Brookings Institute's Metropolitan Policy Program said for years, people just drove more and more every year. The 78 million aging Baby Boomers are driving less. "The biggest factor is Boomers are no longer raising children," says Jana Lynott, AARP's transportation expert. "Raising children in the suburbs, where the majority of Boomers live, is one of greatest generations of driving trips." Teenagers are driving less. In 2008, 31% of 16-years-old had a license compared with 46% in 1983, according to an August study by the University of Michigan researchers.

If you are thinking about buying a new Electric vehicle like the Chevy Volt or one of many vehicles available, remember that these vehicles pose new challenges for drivers and mechanics. They are not a do it yourself repair vehicle. An article by Mark Glover of the Sacramento Bee Newspaper in Sacramento Ca. suggests a checklist before purchasing an electric vehicle. Items on the checklist should include: what is the warranty on the battery? How much does it cost to replace key electric systems components? Are all or some of those components under warranty? Do you need a 240-volt charger? Do you have a number to call if your car just stops on roadway? What happens if you accidentally detach the plug from the vehicle? Should the vehicle be moved if something like that happens? Dave Brauner, the Car Czar" TV/radio show host, recommends that prospective electric vehicle buyers go online and tap into the ocean of information available on the latest EVs.

A Sacramento, Ca. Works program, to train a new generation of alternative-vehicle technicians will begin in February. The 16-week program will have

hybrids and electric vehicles, biodiesel technology, and automotive electric systems and advanced alternative fuels technology.

Chrome wheels are out!! If you have any lingering doubt that the bling-bling era is over, just look at the latest trend in custom wheels that can dress up the most mundane of vehicles. Today, wheels are just as high-style, and just as expensive, but chrome finishes are yielding in popularity to black or touches of color keyed to the car's paint job and for wheels that are chromed, it's often with a dark smoked or color tint – not the super-shinny bling-bling of the past.

A decade ago, oversize wheels, dripping chrome – “dubs” as they became known – were must-have status symbols for rappers and car fanciers. (I guess that would include CHVA member's as we are car fanciers.)

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority announced that ridership for September and October was the highest for any two-month period in the system's history. October ridership rose 3.2% compared with the same month a year ago with an average of just under 1.35 million passenger trips each weekday. Now you know why you could not find an empty seat.

A few short years ago, there were over 100,000 emergency call boxes on U.S. roads, but that number has dropped to about 20,000. The decline of emergency call boxes is due to cell phones. Call boxes are still in areas where cell phone coverage is sparse.

The most common speed limit sign in the U.S. is 25 mph. How many people do you know that obey this sign???

A new entrance to the Stones River National Battlefield is just the beginning of upgrades being made as the Battlefield and National Park honors the 150th anniversary of the civil war and prepare for the anniversary of the battle there. The entrance has a larger, more visabile stone gate that opens to the battlefield and park,

Nearly everyone owns a crescent wrench. The Crescent Tool Company's invention, the Crescent Wrench, was originaly designed for car brakes and clutch adjustments, but it is still a go-to wrench for home repairs and many other uses.

