Regional News

August 17, 2012

Tidbits

- The Fresno County (CA) Jail now has more room for car thieves after the Sheriff’s Department got a $700,000 grant from the state. The move puts more jail beds aside specifically for those criminals so they can’t get out early. Sgt. Len Sherman with the California Highway Patrol’s HEAT Team said, “This is going to be one of the single most important things that’s going to help us reduce the vehicle theft rate in Fresno. The city has reported more than 2,400 auto thefts so far this year, which is an improvement over last year, but the HEAT Team, a multi-agency task force, wants to cut the numbers down even more.
- The Kansas Department of Revenue expects it will cost at least $1.2 million to pay credit card processing fees when motorists renew their tags online. Money will have to come out of highway funds now that the department has temporarily waived the “convenience fee” residents pay for the transaction.
- FMCSA is on Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/FMCSA! The page will be updated daily and will feature announcements, events, important updates, and other information of interest to our broad range of stakeholders.

Region 1 News

AAA, Maine Motor Vehicle Bureau Adds Options to Renew

Drivers in Maine now have an alternative to visiting a local Bureau of Motor Vehicles office when it comes time to renew their driver’s license. Working with an arm of e-government company NIC, the Secretary of States’ office has entered into a partnership with AAA to add services at their local branches that were previously only offered at BMV offices. But it’s not just the Web-averse demographic that’s benefiting from the change. A new Web-based application allows AAA staff to interact with the BMV’s system, and establish drivers’ legal residence in accordance with state law. These “presence” requirements, brought about by Maine’s implementation of federal Real ID rules, meant that residents already accustomed to online renewal were faced with visiting a motor vehicle office in person for the first time in many years. This led to a sharp decline in online renewals and a corresponding influx of residents to motor vehicle offices. The AAA partnership is providing some relief. Beyond the residence verification, AAA staff is trained to conduct vision tests as needed, and securely transmit the data online to BMV. Citizens leave AAA offices with a temporary license they can use until their new driver’s license arrives in the mail from the BMV. In addition to avoiding a trip to one of the 13 motor vehicle offices throughout the state between Monday and Friday, residents renewing at AAA are taking advantage of Saturday hours, conducting their BMV business without interrupting their workweek. Read the full story at GovTech.com.

Mature Drivers Get Additional Wisdom from MVC Safety Program (New Jersey)

Ensuring that New Jersey’s more than 1 million mature drivers remain safely on the road is the focus of a new Motor Vehicle Commission mature driver program entitled, Wisdom Behind the Wheel. The MVC kicked off the safety program along with partners from the state’s Department of Transportation and Division of Highway Traffic Safety, AAA and the medical community. Read the MVC press release.
Online Fees Reduced by 25% for Motor Vehicle Services (New Jersey)
Customers who go online to conduct certain motor vehicle transactions will save nearly $360,000 in fees over the
next year with a new agreement announced this week. Under the agreement, contracted vendor NICUSA Inc., will
now process credit card payments for online transactions such as vehicle registration renewals for 25% less per
transaction than the state’s previous vendor. Beginning today, customers conducting online transactions will see
reduced credit card processing fees on the following transactions: Registration Renewals – $1.50 (down from
$2.00); Personalize/Specialty Plate transactions - $1.50 (down from $2.00); and Driver Abstract requests - $0.75
(down from $1.00). Over the last year, 1.3 million people renewed their registrations online. Read the MVC press
release.

Politician Pushes For Law Requiring Pets Buckle Up On Car Rides (New Jersey)
This one could have some Jersey canines howling with discontent. If a lawmaker has her way, those carefree rides
in cars with their heads out the window will be long gone. Instead, dogs — and cats — will have to be buckled up
for safety, just like humans. If enacted, New Jersey would have the nation’s toughest seat belt law for pets. But on
the other paw, a group of Republican lawmakers has introduced another bill that would make sure dogs and cats
can ride seat-belt free. The competing proposals came about because New Jersey’s law on how drivers should
transport their pets is vague. Under the bill (A3221), drivers would get a $20 ticket and could also be convicted of
an animal cruelty offense, which carries a civil penalty of $250 to $1,000. Pet car harnesses range in price from
$12 to more than $40. A group of Republican lawmakers has introduced a bill clarifying that failure to buckle up
animals is not cruel or inhumane. According to the statute, it’s a disorderly persons offense to drive around pets
"in a cruel or inhumane manner." But it does not spell out what is considered cruel and inhumane. That bill
(A3182) after would fine drivers who don’t buckle up their animals from $250 to $1,000 and up to six months in
prison. No states have laws requiring animals be restrained inside a car, although a bill was introduced in
Tennessee last year requiring it for animals in the front seat. The bill’s prospects are uncertain. Read the full story
at NJ.com.

NY To Allow Online Voter Registration via DMV
Governor Cuomo and his aides have announced a plan to increase voter registration and allow online vote
registration for the first time. The plan calls for linking voter registration to internet applications for driver's
licenses. Up until now, New Yorkers could register to vote when they went to their DMV office to update their
driver's license, or non-driver’s ID card. Now, they will be able to complete the process online. The Cuomo
Administration will make a special effort to reach out to non English speakers, by offering the voter registration
forms in Spanish, as well as Chinese, Korean, and Bengali. The entire system of online vote registration is not up
and running yet, and won’t be in time for this year’s Presidential election. For now, staff at the DMV will have to
print out the voter registration forms, and then mail them to the appropriate county or city board of elections
offices. They hope that soon, the local boards of election will be able to accept the DMV voter registration
applications electronically, saving, time, money and postage. Savings are anticipated to total at least $270,000
per year. Officials say there aren’t any new costs to create the online voter registration program, describing the
change as simply a "software tweak”. Read the full story at North Public Radio.

Vermont ACLU Questions Police Use of Automated License Plate Readers
Two weeks ago, ACLU chapters in Vermont and 34 other states petitioned local and state law enforcement agencies
for information regarding their use of automated license plate readers. In the past four years, more than 30 law
enforcement agencies throughout Vermont, have purchased at least one automated license plate reader. The cameras have recently helped police track the likes of an Enosburg Falls bank robber, an armed robber in Brattleboro and a noncompliant, out-of-state sex offender. The Vermont Department of Public Safety considered privacy concerns when drafting its policy on the retention of automated license plate reader data. Vermont took a different route than a lot of other states with LPR data. There’s really no standard for retention. Vermont went with a four-year retention plan simply because Vermont State Police also retains its in-car mobile videos for four years. DPS stores the plate data on servers at its headquarters in Waterbury. Only analysts at the Vermont Information and Analysis Center can access the information for law enforcement. Homeland Security requires that any law enforcement agency that uses federal grants secured by Homeland Security to purchase an automated license plate reader submit its data to the Williston Center. Of the 46 automated license plate readers purchased by Vermont law enforcement, at least 31 were paid for with grants from Homeland Security. Vermont State Police have six vehicles equipped with the devices. Despite assurances, the ACLU said worries any checks in place will erode over time. Read the full story in the Burlington Free-Press.

**Region II News**

**Graduated Driver's License Saving Teens Lives (Arkansas)**

A crash comparison analysis spanning from 2008 - 2010 demonstrates that the Graduated Driver License law has been effective in reducing crashes involving teen drivers and in saving lives. Between 2008 and 2010, fatalities involving teen drivers were reduced by 59%, from about 25 fatal crashes per 10,000 drivers in 2008 to 10 in 2010. This translates to an estimated 32 actual lives saved. The most drastic change was among 16-year-old drivers. The number of crashes among this age group was reduced by 22% (from 1,467 per 10,000 drivers in 2008 to 1,145 in 2010). ACHI also found that between 2008 and 2010, fatalities involving teen drivers from 11 p.m. and 4 a.m. dropped by 76%, from 21 fatalities in 2008 to 5 fatalities in 2010. Teens between the ages of 16 and 18 experienced a 19% reduction in single vehicle crashes, and a 52% reduction in single vehicle fatal crashes. The limit on passengers in a vehicle driven by a teen also helped save lives. ACHI found a 20% decrease in teen driver crashes with multiple passengers from 2008 to 2010. The most significant decrease was recognized in cars carrying five or more passengers. Read the full story in Today's THV.

**Auto Data Direct, Inc., Selected as Authorized Provider for Georgia Salvage Dealers**

Effective July 1, 2012, with the passage of House Bill 872 during the 2012 session of the Georgia General Assembly, any business operating as a scrap metal processor, secondary metals recycler, or used motor vehicle parts dealer, must report certain motor vehicle title cancellation and NMVTIS information to the Georgia Department of Revenue. The law also requires the Department to provide an electronic reporting method for salvage dealers to meet those state and federal reporting requirements. In a July 2, 2012 Information Bulletin regarding the new law, the Georgia DOR announced they were authorizing Auto Data Direct, Inc.(ADD), to provide the reporting service on their behalf. Georgia DOR has directed salvage dealers to ADD’s website to set up an account and begin the new reporting requirements. ADD has set up a page specifically for the Georgia dealers which provides detailed information on the new law and walks them through the set-up and reporting process. Read DOR’s Information Bulletin. Read the DOR press release.
DMV Program Saves Lives in Two Minutes *(South Carolina)*

A new online tool in South Carolina is up and running, and utilizing the program could be the difference between life and death in an emergency situation. The DMV is giving drivers the chance to add important contact information in case of an emergency, and anyone interested in using the tool can do so in about two minutes. The new program allows anyone with a state issued driver's license, driver's permit, or identification card to go online, and add two emergency contact names and numbers. A spokeswoman with the DMV says they decided to add this option after they were approached by workers in the medical field who said they were having problems tracking down family members of victims in emergency situations. Right now there's only about 21,000 people who have gone online and added their contact information. There are 4 million licensed drivers in South Carolina. South Carolina DMV officials say they’re trying to spread the word. The more people who sign up, the more popular it becomes amongst law enforcement officers. *Read the full story at WMBF News.*

New State Registration Rules on the Way *(Texas)*

Texans titling a vehicle in the state and first-time registrants will soon have to show identification, enhancing public safety and paving the way for more customer-friendly automation. The DMV Board passed new identification rules at its Thursday meeting. The rules were required as part of two new state laws (HB 2017 and HB 2357) that mandate identification for titling a vehicle and first-time registrants. This change does not apply to registration renewals. The identification requirements are a two-phase process designed to give Texans, tax assessor-collectors and businesses an opportunity to become educated on the new procedure. Beginning Sept. 3, vehicle buyers can show any government photo identification if it includes a current photo, unique identification number, birth date and expiration date. On Sept. 1, 2013, and thereafter, the only acceptable government photo identification will be a: state driver's license or identification certification issued by a U.S. states or territory, U.S. or foreign passport, U.S. military identification, NATO identification. U.S. DHS identification-issued document. ID issued under a U.S. Status of Forces Agreement, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services documentation. The new identification requirements are another step toward creating more electronic services for customers, and ensuring the integrity of the motor vehicle database. Next year Texans can expect to see the replacement of paper titles with electronic ones or eTitles, that will take the burden off vehicle owners to keep track of their title and help to reduce title fraud. The eTitle system is expected to launch in fall 2013. The TxDMV plans to further automate the motor vehicle database so vehicle owners can be found by name. The agency is in the process of securing a vendor to retool its registration and titling system so it can support additional online services for customers and streamline business processes. *Read the full story in the Times Record News.*

West Virginia in Compliance With Real ID Act

Despite protest from drivers, West Virginia continues to be in compliance with the federal Real ID Act. Steve Dale, deputy commissioner with the Division of Motor Vehicles, told a Legislative interim committee Aug. 14 the state decided soon after the act was passed in 2005 that it would comply with all mandates. This includes a new licensing process that requires drivers to present more documentation than was once required. Dale said the licensing system in West Virginia has three facets and those aspects haven't changed all that much. To obtain a drivers license, residents must prove their identity and legal status. The second is a Social Security card. The DMV used to accept military IDs that listed Social Security numbers, but those are no longer accepted forms of proof. If a customers doesn't have his or her card, the DMV will accept a paycheck stub or a 1099 or W2 form. The third is
proof of residency. Previously, drivers only had to bring one proof of residency, such as a utility bill. Now, two are required. Both must have the name of the customer and physical address. "West Virginia's compliance with Real ID was a lot easier than most other states," Dale told the committee. "Why? No. 1, West Virginia already had a legal presence requirement. We've had that on the books since 2002. No. 2, we already had many of these requirements already in place." All licenses issued under the old system will be valid until 2017 and can be used for any federal purpose. Transitioning to the Real ID system will allow the DMV to make some changes, including possibly transitioning to an eight-year issuance of licenses. Because documents will be stored on a database, drivers may not have to return to the DMV for renewals - they may be able to do it via Internet or at kiosks. The DMV replaced its printers and cameras in 2008 and 2009. At the same time, the state was transitioning to Real ID, so much of the Real ID system was incorporated at little cost. In addition, the state has received about $2 million in grants from the federal government for complying with Real ID. Read the full story at WOWK-TV.

Region III News

Commercial Schools Favor Putting the Brakes on Pending Bill (Illinois)
Pending legislation would put new requirements on commercial driving school instructors, including those who want to contract with public schools. The cost of driver's ed was at least part of the reason behind Senate Bill 3367, according to its sponsor, Sen. Susan Garrett. "As the costs for driver's education continue to escalate, we have seen that teenagers are opting out of taking driver's education courses. It is critical that we rein in the costs and, at the same time, ensure that we have safe and accountable driving education programs throughout the state," Garrett has said as the reason for the legislation. The bill would require a commercial driving school instructor to get the same certificate and endorsement to teach in order to contract with a public school district. The bill went to the governor for signature on June 26. The bill also would require the ISBE and the secretary of state to work together to adopt course content standards for what topics must be taught to teenagers enrolled in driver’s ed. Read the full story in the South Town Star.

New School Bus Safety Law Starts Wednesday for Iowa Drivers
With a new school year starting, Iowa drivers are being reminded of a new school bus safety law. The law increases penalties for failure to slow for a bus with flashing lights or stop when the stop arm is extended. Injuring or killing a child under those conditions carries more severe penalties. Called "Kadyn’s Law", it’s named for Kadyn Halverson, a 7 year-old Northwood, Iowa girl who was hit by a pickup and killed last year while walking to her bus. Read the full story at KTIV.

New Michigan Historical Plate Law Gives Cruising Cars Freer Rein
With one pass of the pen, Gov. Rick Snyder changed the history of historical license plates in Michigan. Now, vehicles with historical license plates can be freely driven anywhere during the entire month of August, to the delight of those sporting them at the Woodward Dream Cruise. Previously, those vehicles could be driven only directly to and from festivals, tours, car club activities, parades or exhibits. That meant anyone just out for a cruise, including before or after the day of the Dream Cruise, could be ticketed for driving with illegal plates. The bill, signed last month, allows cars with historical plates to drive freely during August. Historical plates cost $30 and are good for 10 years. To qualify for a historical plate, a vehicle has to meet the following qualifications: more than 25 years old, owned solely as a collector’s item and used only for events such as club activities, parades and
car shows and cannot be used for routine, day-to-day transportation. The number of vehicles with state-issued historical plates has steadily increased over the years. Read the full story in Detroit News.

**New Donate Life License Plate Now On Sale (Michigan)**
Michigan’s newest license plate, which encourages organ donation efforts, is now on sale. The Donate Life plate carries the Donate Life logo and the message: “Be an Organ, Eye & Tissue Donor.” A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the plate, which costs $35 in addition to any applicable registration fees, will go to the Thomas Daley Gift of Life Fund to promote organ, tissue and eye donation. The fund is named in honor of Thomas Daley, 23, who died in an accident in 2011 and was an organ donor. Secretary of State Ruth Johnson has championed organ donation awareness efforts since taking office. Under her leadership, record numbers of people are signing up as potential donors on Michigan’s Organ Donor Registry. The Registry grew by nearly 400,000 people – a 25% increase – last year. The Donate Life plate can be purchased by mail, fax or at any Secretary of State office and will be mailed to customers. Donate Life plates may also be personalized using Plate it Your Way. Read the SOS press release.

**DOT to Remind Drivers of Roadway Fatalities through Electronic Signs (Missouri)**
The electronic roadside signs along Missouri’s highways are now sharing more than just travel information. Missouri Department of Transportation began using those electronic signs last week to keep tally of the number of people who died on Missouri roads since the beginning of the year. MoDOT hopes drivers will take notice and become safer drivers. Other states have also tried this tactic, including Tennessee, which began running a daily roadway fatality count on overhead Dynamic Message Signs after an increase in crash deaths across the state. The decision to post this information came after state officials noticed roadway fatalities are currently up 14% from this same time period last year. After a six-year decline in fatalities, there is now an upward trend. While MoDOT cannot say for certain why this number has jumped, it has identified several factors that may have played a part, including distracted driving (which is involved in 80% of crashes), substance-impaired driving (contributing to 30% of statewide fatalities in 2011), young and inexperienced drivers (who were involved in one of four traffic crashes), and the lack of seatbelt usage (as seven out of 10 people killed in crashes through the last three years were unbuckled). Read the full story in the AASHTO Journal.

**DMV Adds Vehicle Title and Registration To Its List Of Online Services (Wisconsin)**
Now when you purchase an auto, light truck, motorcycle or SUV through a private sale you can go online to title and register it, saving yourself a trip to the DMV. A new title application system called eMV Public can be found at www.wisconsindmv.gov. Dealerships have had this convenience for a while, and now it is being extended it to customers who purchase vehicles through private sales. The eMV Public application is available 24/7, is easy to use, and title record and license plate information are updated immediately after the online application is completed. Once complete, title, receipt and any other required documents and fees must be mailed to the DMV. New license plates should arrive within two weeks. With eMV Public customers can transfer existing valid license plates, obtain new license plates (within two weeks), and print 90-day temporary license plates for easy display in the back window of most vehicles. With the addition of eMV Public, there are now well over a dozen DMV services online. Read the DMV press release.
Bill Would Make Public Records Easier to Search (California)

California could become the first state in the nation to require that public agencies provide their records in searchable formats, such as Excel or Word. A bill making its way through the Legislature would establish an open data standard, requiring agencies to buy software that offers data in searchable formats when replacing existing technology. Agencies would also have to use these formats when posting data online or responding to requests for public records. Currently, many agencies provide information in image files that are not searchable even though they also store that data in more easily searchable formats. Read the full story at BayCitizen.org.

Young Illegal Immigrants Will Be Eligible for California Driver's Licenses

California will issue driver's licenses to hundreds of thousands of young illegal immigrants once the Obama administration grants them work permits, a move that could reignite a divisive debate that has simmered for nearly 20 years. The state's decision is the opposite from Arizona's, where Gov. Jan Brewer signed an executive order outlawing driver's licenses for anyone who benefits from the new federal deportation relief. The starkly different responses show that the benefits of the federal directive could vary depending on where immigrants live.

The Obama administration left it to states to decide whether to issue driver's licenses and offer in-state college tuition rates and other services to people who came here illegally as children but now are eligible for work permits. Arizona was the first to say no, and California -- home to more than 400,000 young immigrants expected to qualify -- was one of the first to say yes when deportation relief became available this week. California's 1993 ban on driver's licenses for illegal immigrants stands, but the DMV will treat as "temporary legal residents" those who qualify for deportation relief. "California law is not changing. ... However, those applicants approved by (U.S. DHS) will become temporary legal residents. Sixty-two percent of Californians opposed granting licenses to undocumented immigrants in 2005. Californians then were evenly divided over a "different kind" of license that labeled them as nonresidents. Now, young immigrants with a job permit and Social Security card can prove legal residency to the DMV. Read the full story in the San Jose Mercury News.

Californians Urged to Report Out-Of-State Car Registration Cheats

The California Highway Patrol is asking residents to report drivers who unlawfully register their vehicles out-of-state. According to the CHP, drivers who don't register their cars are cheating the state out of millions of dollars. By law, new California residents have 20 days to register their car after moving into the state. But some drivers don't, due to the state's high registration fees. The CHP is reminding the public of a feature on their website called CHEATERS, short for "Californians Help Eliminate All The Evasive Registration Scofflaws." Residents can enter an offending driver's information, and the Highway Patrol tracks them down. Last year, the CHEATERS website helped bring in three quarters of a million dollars in registration fees. The fine for not registering a car in California is around $400. Read the full story at CBS Local.

Cash-Strapped MVD Stalling Online License Renewal System (New Mexico)

The wait in line at Motor Vehicle Division offices across New Mexico usually is pretty long. The delay isn't quite as long, however, as the amount of time state Sen. Phil Griego has been waiting for the agency to implement a law intended to help do away with those lines. Griego in 2010 carried a bill that would allow many residents to renew a driver's license online and skip the in-person waiting game. But the division hasn't had the cash to make the law a reality. Part of the problem is that officials in the MVD have been swamped with other federally mandated
projects, including a new commercial driver’s license system. Staff in the division also recently have been working on a project to electronically scan all documents related to first-time applications for licenses, registration and titles. On top of that, the department doesn’t have the estimated $2 million to $3 million to implement the online license renewal system. Still, the project remains a priority “given its benefits to greatly improve customer service and reduce wait times in field offices. Currently, the department is exploring cost-effective possibilities, including designing and implementing this service with the use of internal [information technology] staff. The division doesn’t have a timeline yet for the project, but hopes to make a decision about it this summer. When implemented, the new law will mean drivers can skip eye tests and photos for as long as 16 years, unless they have vision changes or significant changes in appearance. In those cases, the division will ask that they visit an office to renew a license. All drivers who chose to renew in person still will take the eye test. License holders also have the option of renewing by phone or mail. There are exceptions in the law, however. First-time applicants, those changing their name and those older than 75 still must appear in person for a license. Meanwhile, some of MVD’s other online services have proven popular. The division since 2007 has offered online vehicle registration renewals, and the number has climbed from 131,162 in 2007 to 202,260 so far in 2012. To encourage online vehicle registration renewals, the state last month starting sending renewal reminder postcards instead of packets with information about renewing. Sending the cheaper postcards saved the state more than $330,000 in postage and other costs. Because the postcards don’t contain an envelope, drivers must provide their own if they choose to renew by mail. The state had been spending more than $500,000 on about 1.6 million renewal packets a year.

Read the full story in the Santa Fe New Mexican.

Other News of Interest

Grant Opportunities Now Available
The following DOT/FMCSA grant opportunities are now available:

- FY 2013 Border Enforcement Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability, Modification 3
- FY 2013 MCSAP New Entrant Notice of Funding Availability, Modification 3
- FY 2013 MCSAP High Priority Notice of Funding Availability, Modification 7

Click on the links to learn more.

Chinese Company Stops Selling Fake U.S. Ids
A Chinese company has shut down operations, its website says. ID Chief via its website had charged $200 for a U.S. driver’s license and a duplicate copy, which the company fully admitted were fake. But the website has been taken down and replaced with a message that it’s “closed for business” and would stop its “novelty ID service.” The message added: “We also want you to be smart and only use your novelty ID for buying beer in movies, we do not like criminals and do not think we are bad people, we just try to help the poor student have some fun. Again thank you for your support and understanding.” Read the full story in The Washington Times.

GM Recalls 38K Police Impalas in North America
General Motors is recalling more than 38,000 Chevrolet Impala police cars in North America because the lower front control arms could fracture, increasing the risk of crash. The recall, which does not affect non-police versions of the Impala, covers 36,413 cars in the United States and 1,713 in Canada. It covers cars from the 2008 to 2012 model years. GM said there had been no reports of accidents or injuries related to the issue. A fracture of the control arms, which support a vehicle’s wheels, fracture, can lead to loss of control, according to NHTSA.
documents. Should a fracture occur, some tire "squeal" or "chirping" may be heard when turning at low speeds. The problem was discovered after GM got several reports from two police fleets of front lower control arms that had fractured. The recall, which entails replacing both front, lower control arms, is expected to begin on Aug. 21.

Read the full story at Foxbusiness.com.

Did you know . . .

- Pigs weigh about 2 1/2 pounds at birth. When fully grown, boars (male hogs) weigh more than 500 pounds, and sows (female hogs) weigh from 300-500 pounds. The heaviest hog in history, Big Bill, weighed 2,552 pounds.
- A pig can run a seven minute mile.
- People around the world eat more pork than any other meat. In the US it ranks behind beef and poultry.
- A pig’s squeal can range from 110-115 decibels. Compare that to the Concorde jet, which is usually under 112 decibels.
- In some areas hogs were turned out to find their own food. Hogs would roam freely, eating what they could find—acorns from the ground or roots, which they dug from the ground with their snouts. On Manhattan Island, New York, the hogs rampaged through grain fields until farmers were forced to build a wall to keep them out. The street running along this wall became Wall Street.