

## AAMVA Regional News

January 11, 2013

### Region I News

#### **Connecticut to Grant Driver's Licenses to Illegal Immigrants Who Qualify Under Obama Directive**

Connecticut will issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants who qualify for a federal immigration enforcement program, an official in Gov. Dannel Malloy's administration said Monday. The driver's licenses will provide temporary legal status for young motorists to obtain car registration and insurance. To be eligible for the driver's licenses, immigrants must comply with a directive issued by President Barack Obama in June that eased enforcement of immigration laws. The driver's licenses will not be "ID compliant," which means they may not be used to buy airline tickets or other functions requiring photo ID. About 4,000 or 5,000 motorists in Connecticut are eligible. [Read the full story at CBSLocal.com.](#)

#### **D.C. Rolls Out New Machines to Test Suspected Drunken Drivers**

District leaders showed off new breath-testing technology and new anti-drunken driving legislation on Wednesday in an effort to finally move past the embarrassing revelation in 2010 that hundreds of its alcohol-breath tests might have yielded inaccurate results. The revelation left the Attorney General's Office scrambling to fend off legal challenges and meant that D.C. police officers had to forego administering breath tests on suspected drunken drivers. Mayor Vincent Gray signed two bills into law, and government employees demonstrated a new high-tech breath-test machine called the Intoximeter ECIR 2. The machine, one of three purchased by the city, not only tests the subject's breath to determine blood-alcohol content at least twice, but it samples the surrounding air to ensure that it is not biasing the results. Each machine costs about \$7,000 and features a digital readout, ID scanner, keyboard and has a printer linked to it. Because the machines are too big to carry around easily in a squad car, they are kept at station houses. Officers bring drunken-driving suspects in and use the machines to analyze their blood-alcohol content. The breath-test program was thrown into disarray in 2010, after D.C.'s medical examiner's office discovered that test results had not been properly certified, barring them as evidence in many DUI cases. One bill that Gray signed Wednesday updates the city's procedure for administering the tests, requiring more frequent quality-control checks and that only specially certified individuals administer them. Gray also signed a bill that expands a program that allows drivers whose licenses have been revoked because of a DUI to drive with an ignition interlock system, which regularly checks the driver's blood-alcohol content. Currently, of the 80 people eligible for the interlock program, only one participates. The District had seven alcohol-impaired driving fatalities in 2010 and eight in 2011. [Read the full story in the Washington Examiner.](#)

#### **Bill to Put Squeeze on Toll Evaders Begins to Take Shape (Maryland)**

The days of getting a free pass at Maryland's toll plazas might soon come to an end for scofflaws who have been cheating without fear of penalty. The General Assembly will be asked to toughen the toll evasion law to include a \$50 citation — and the possible suspension of vehicle registration. Over the past five fiscal years, the state has collected \$1.5 billion in tolls but has \$6.7 million in unpaid bills. Much of the lost revenue bled through the E-ZPass lanes when motorists without transponders in their vehicles failed to pay bills generated by the video system that takes a picture of the license plate. The revenue loss could worsen as the state creates more all-electronic toll roads, such as the Intercounty Connector, and added the option to roads such as the new Interstate 95 lanes north of Baltimore. At the root of the problem is that state law does not include a definition of what constitutes a video toll violation. Worsening the situation is a 2010 legal opinion that said the MdTA lacked the statutory authority to flag the registrations of toll evaders. A police officer at a toll plaza is the only

way to catch a violator. An attempt to tighten the law last session failed because the MdTA got a late start on drafting the bill, and the effort got lost in the debates over taxes and gambling. Under the proposed legislation, a motorist who goes through a toll both without paying cash or using E-ZPass would get a bill for the amount due. Failure to pay within 30 days would result in a \$50 civil citation. The motorist could either pay the \$50 plus toll due or dispute the citation in court. If a motorist fails to act, the MdTA could ask the Motor Vehicle Administration to suspend the vehicle registration or send the matter to the state's Central Collections Unit. The license plate number could be programmed into the license plate readers at toll facilities and the motorist could be arrested for operating without a registration. [Read the full story in The Baltimore Sun.](#)

### **[Pennsylvania Lawyer Wants to do Away with Breathalyzers](#)**

A Pennsylvania lawyer has filed a request to throw out breath testing for alcohol in the state, just a week after a judge ruled the tests aren't accurate for analyzing alcohol in the blood. At issue are breathalyzer tests, which Dauphin County Common Pleas Court Judge Lawrence Clark ruled last week were not reliable in cases above .15 or under .05. "What we are looking to do is to dismiss all breath testing result charges that are currently pending and reopen old ones that are a year and 90 days within that time bar," said DUI attorney Justin McShane. Sgt. Terry Donnelly, who leads Pittsburgh's DUI Task Force, says the machines are calibrated by an expert and a DUI suspect has already been given two field type sobriety tests before the machine gets involved. So the resulting bar graph is more of a confirmation. Some departments have abandoned breathalyzers, using only blood tests. If the Dauphin County judge sides with McShane, and he already has once.... To the extent that the Superior Court or Supreme Court adopts his rationale and agrees with his holding, the repercussions could be vast. No word on when the judge will rule. [Read the full story at CBS Local.](#)

### **[State Plans New DUI Court to Treat Repeat Offenders](#) (Vermont)**

State officials have opened up a new front in their "aggressive war" on recidivism with a plan to curb repeat drunken driving offenses by treating what Gov. Peter Shumlin says is often the underlying cause: alcoholism. "The evidence suggests that the folks who are involved in DUIs, and particularly repeat DUI offenses, are addicted to alcohol," Shumlin said. Of the 77 people killed in car crashes in Vermont in 2012, 23 died in crashes involving an intoxicated driver. Like other drug courts, DUI treatment court would target an addiction that is fueling crime. Similar efforts in other states have succeeded in reducing recidivism rates. Somewhere around 70% of people convicted of driving under the influence do not make the same mistake twice. The DUI-treatment court would be open to those who do offend again, and who are convicted and have served the minimum sentence. It's specifically geared for the recidivist offender. Reducing recidivism would reduce criminal justice spending. The National Association of Drug Court Professionals suggest that a state saves \$3.36 in avoided criminal justice costs for every \$1 it invests in drug courts. Vermont spends \$54,000 to incarcerate a prisoner for a year. In a 2011 study, the National Transportation Safety Board said Vermont is among eight states that should toughen its laws against drunken driving. That same year the governor signed "Nick's Law," legislation named after Nick Fournier, 18, who was killed by a drunken driver in 2007 in Colchester. The law bolstered prison time for repeat DUI offenders. [Read the full story in the Burlington Free Press.](#)

### **[Law Enforcement Groups Hesitant on Marijuana, Driver's License Bills](#) (Vermont)**

The associations representing the Vermont police chiefs and the state sheriffs both hope legislators do not rush into decriminalizing marijuana or issuing driver's licenses to illegal immigrants without hearing from law enforcement about the possible negative aspects to both proposals. "We want to make our position clear, as law enforcement officers serving the citizens of the state of Vermont, we do not support these legislative actions," the joint letter signed by Brandon Police Chief Chris Brickell and Windham County Sheriff Keith Clark states. "We have historically not supported legislation that based on

our experience, education, and training puts the lives and safety of Vermonters at risk," the two association presidents wrote. With the Legislature not convened or any testimony scheduled, Brickell and Clark wrote that they were miffed to read media reports and statements from legislators indicating the two bills are likely to pass this year. The Legislature opens Wednesday. The letter from the two presidents notes decriminalization of marijuana will lead to increased use by Vermont teens, a group rated among the highest users in the country based on a Vermont Health Department report. Clark and Brickell said they are worried the proposed driver's licenses for undocumented migrant workers would create a legal form of identification for persons illegally in this country. [Read the full story in the Burlington Free Press.](#)

## Region II News

### **New Tag and Tax Program Means Combining Vehicle Fees** *(North Carolina)*

The North Carolina DMV is working with county revenue offices across the state to educate vehicle owners to a new legislative program that will require the payment of vehicle property taxes at the same time vehicle registration renewals are due. The new "Tag & Tax Together" program is the result of a law passed in 2005 by the General Assembly that makes vehicle property taxes due in full before a vehicle's registration can be renewed. To help vehicle owners with the new requirement, NCDMV is posting a special web page offering information about the program, which is set to begin with new combined tag and tax notices mailed in mid-2013. The web page is located at [www.ncdot.gov/dmv](http://www.ncdot.gov/dmv) and can be accessed with one click on "Tag & Tax Together." [Read the DMV press release.](#)

### **North Carolina Appeals Ruling On 'Choose Life' License Plates**

The state of North Carolina filed an appeal Friday to a judge's ruling that license plates with the words "Choose Life" on them are unconstitutional because the state does not offer an alternative for supporters of abortion rights. The action comes less than a month after U.S. District Court Judge James Fox ruled: "The State's offering a Choose Life license plate in the absence of a pro-choice alternative constitutes viewpoint discrimination in violation of the First Amendment." The ruling was praised by the American Civil Liberties Union, which had filed a lawsuit in 2011 to stop the specialty plates. The ACLU called Friday's appeal "unfortunate." The bill for the license plates passed in 2011. The legislation also mandated that money raised from the sale of the specialty plates would go to a nonprofit group that supports crisis pregnancy centers. During the fight to get the bill passed, North Carolina lawmakers voted down amendments that would have created alternatives for abortion-rights supporters such as "Trust Women. Respect Choice." [Read the full story at CNN.com.](#)

### **North Carolina Switches Stance on Drivers Licenses for Illegal Immigrants**

After first indicating it would grant driver's licenses to young illegal immigrants who have received two-year deferrals from deportation, the North Carolina DMV now says it will not allow them to drive until the agency receives a legal opinion that requires it to do otherwise. The decision, which could affect 18,000 North Carolina immigrants, has sent a wave of anxiety across the Tar Heel State. Many states, including North Carolina, have passed laws that prevent illegal immigrants from getting driver's licenses. The DMV said this summer that it would grant driver's licenses to those who received deferred action. But Marge Howell, a spokeswoman for the DMV, said this week that the agency decided to deny those licenses and seek a legal opinion from state Attorney General Roy Cooper on how the program conforms with state law. In a Sept. 10 letter to Cooper, then-Commissioner Michael Robertson sought clarification on whether individuals granted an employment authorization card with a special code indicating they've received deferred action constitutes the bearer's "legal presence" in the United States. "No such licenses will be issued unless we receive written guidance from your office informing us that North Carolina law does, in fact, require them to be issued," Robertson wrote. [Read the full story in the Charlotte Observer.](#)

### **Bill Introduced for No Front Virginia License Plate**

Virginia drivers may soon find themselves sporting just one license plate rather than two, all in an effort by the state government to save a few dollars. Sen. Frank Wagner has introduced legislation reducing the number of license plates furnished by the DMV to vehicle owners from two to one, and requiring the single license plate to be attached to the rear of the vehicle. The measure is similar to one introduced in 2012 and held for consideration in 2013. The Virginia Department of Planning Budget estimated that Locke's bill would result in a savings of \$2.3 million a year if the government did not need to turn out two plates for each vehicle. The implementation cost of the measure was estimated at a relatively paltry \$13,000 in one-time costs. Virginia license plates are produced by inmates in the Powhatan Correctional Center as part of Virginia Correctional Enterprises. [Read the full story in the Fairfax Underground.](#)

### **Virginia Could Be First State to Drop Gas Tax**

Gov. Bob McDonnell's proposal to make Virginia the first state to eliminate the gas tax is kicking up dust inside and outside the Old Dominion. The Republican's plan to provide more than \$3.1 billion in transportation funding replaces the state's "outdated gas tax revenue model" with an increase of 0.8% in the state's 5% sales tax, with the new money dedicated to transportation. The governor calls the state gas tax, 17.5 cents per gallon, a "stagnant revenue source," citing improving gas mileage for vehicles and increasing use of alternative fuels. The state's gas tax is actually markedly lower than the U.S. average of about 30 cents per gallon. Drivers would still pay the federal tax of 18.4 cents per gallon. Criticism of McDonnell's plan immediately "came from both sides". [Read the full story in USA Today.](#)

## **Region III News**

### **Illinois Passes Legislation Authorizing 'Temporary Visitor's Driver's Licenses**

This week the Illinois House of Representatives passed Senate Bill 957 which would authorize the Secretary of State to issue a "temporary visitor's driver's license" to foreign nationals. This clears the legislation for Governor Quinn's expected signature. When enacted, the Illinois Secretary of State may issue a temporary visitor's driver's license to an applicant who has resided in the State for a period in excess of one year, is ineligible to obtain a social security number and is unable to present documentation authorizing the applicant's presence in the country. This license is valid for 3 years and is clearly marked "not to be acceptable as proof of the holder's identity." As an interesting caveat, the legislation mandates that a temporary visitor's driver's license is invalid if the holder is unable to provide proof of liability insurance upon the request of a law enforcement officer, in which case the holder has committed a petty offense. The legislation also authorizes the use of a consular identification document for procurement of a temporary visitor's driver's license and creates an affiliated Driver Services Administration Fund for managing collected fees and operational costs.

### **DOT's Stance on Immigrant Law Under Attack (Iowa)**

The Iowa Department of Transportation's interpretation of a federal action allowing some undocumented immigrants to legally remain in the U.S. came under sharp and bipartisan criticism during a hearing at the Capitol on Wednesday. The DOT announced late last month that it would not issue driver's licenses to immigrants granted temporary legal status under a federal program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The decision means perhaps 5,000 Iowa immigrants who have or could be granted legal status will be ineligible for driver's licenses or state-issued IDs, and that several who have already received licenses face cancellation. At Wednesday's hearing of the Legislature's Administrative Rules Review Committee, several immigrant advocacy groups, a handful of Democratic and Republican lawmakers and others challenged the department's policy, grilling Director Paul Trombino on its legal basis and justification. The central conflict between the DOT and its critics is whether DACA status constitutes authorized, legal presence in the United States. When the policy took

effect, the DOT began studying whether individuals granted the new DACA status should be granted driver's licenses. On Dec. 27, it announced they should not. On Wednesday, Trombino said his agency is prevented by state law from granting licenses because the DACA status did not constitute an authorized presence in the country. Iowa law requires individuals issued licenses and ID cards to be "authorized to be present," he said, which those receiving DACA status are not. Several of the speakers noted that DACA status comes with federal work authorizations and other documentation that would allow a noncitizen to obtain a driver's license under any other circumstances. The only difference, they said, is that employment authorization documents issued to immigrants with DACA status contain a specific a reference code. One legislator said he believed the DOT should have enacted its policy through a formal rule-making process and said denying immigrants the opportunity to drive prevented them from attending work or school and undermined public safety overall. The department's view was backed up the Gov. Terry Branstad's office. At the hearing, Branstad's legal counsel reiterated Trombino's argument that DACA status was an "exercise in prosecutorial discretion" rather than official legal status. "Here in Iowa, it comes down to what authorized presence means for a driver's license," she said. [Read the full story in the Des Moines Register.](#)

### **Iowa Study Finds Stop-Arm Cameras Aid Enforcement of Passing Laws, but Challenges Remain**

A joint safety study conducted by researchers at Iowa State University and the University of Iowa found that stop-arm cameras can be effective in deterring motorists from illegally passing school buses, if there exists supporting processes that result in violations. The researchers also recommended the installation of a second stop arm at the rear of the school bus as a "low-cost" traffic solution to illegal passing incidents. According to a survey conducted by nearly 30 states last May for the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, nearly 100,000 school bus drivers reported that 88,025 vehicles passed their school buses on a single day. In addition, NASDPTS estimates that motorists illegally pass school buses 13 million times per year, nationwide. An average of 16 children per year are killed by drivers who illegally pass stopped school buses, according to NHTSA. The Iowa study was required by the passage of Kady's Law in March of last year to determine if cameras mounted on buses reduce stop-arm violations. Additionally, the study encouraged school districts to only drop off and pick up school bus riders on the side of the road on which their home is located. It also recommended that illustrations depicting when motorists should stop for school buses be included in the state's driver training curriculum. The researchers concluded that stop-arm cameras do aid law enforcement, as the technology is an improvement over the "laborious task" of school bus drivers individually noting when illegal passing incidents occur. Still, when cameras are used, school districts must isolate images showing the illegal passer and provide this to law enforcement, which must then verify a violation occurred to secure a conviction before a ticket can be issued. The report noted that North Carolina increased stop-arm violation penalties and fines on motorists for more than a decade, but little progress was made until the state enacted a law that allowed for automation and third-party involvement to process the video, verify the law was broken and issue tickets. In Iowa, Kady's Law imposes a mandatory minimum fine of \$250 for the first offense. But the report said that records show that 65% of fines imposed between Aug. 15 and Oct. 31, 2012, were less than the minimum. [Read the full story at STNon-Line.com.](#)

### **Michigan Law Changes Overweight Truck Rules**

A new law in Michigan includes multiple rule changes for truck drivers. Gov. Rick Snyder signed into law a lengthy transportation bill that includes some forgiveness for certain overweight loads. Specifically, the change would give courts discretion in imposing penalties on trucks that are not overweight overall, but may have one or more axles carrying more weight than allowed. Michigan law now requires courts to impose a \$200 fine for axle weight violations up to 4,000 pounds. The fine is applied even if the overall weight is lawful. The change will apply only to loads that are overweight on at least one axle between 1,000 pounds and 4,000 pounds. In addition to court discretion on fines, violators could avoid the \$200

per-axle fine resulting from misloaded axles if the fine under the schedule for excess weight would be less. Also included in the bill – HB5668 – is a requirement that courts impose penalties on special permitted loads that are overweight by up to 1,000 pounds on at least one axle but are not overweight overall. Fines could only be as much as \$600. A separate provision in the bill brings Michigan into compliance with federal regulations by outlawing truckers' use of text messaging devices while driving. A ban is also included on the use of hand-held phones. Violations would be considered a "serious traffic violation." [Read the full story in TruckFlix.](#)

#### **[New Law Means No Hand-Held Cell Phone Use For Teen Drivers \(Michigan\)](#)**

Gov. Rick Snyder on Tuesday signed a law prohibiting novice teen drivers from using a hand-held cellphone while behind the wheel. The law takes effect in late March and applies to holders of Level 1 licenses, who must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or another driver at least 21 years old. It also covers Level 2 licenses, which allow driving alone with limits on hours and carrying of young passengers. A violation is a civil infraction and will not result in points being added to a driver's record. Drivers with full privileges are exempted. Level 1 and 2 drivers can legally talk on a hands-free phone system integrated into their vehicles and can use a hand-held phone or to report an emergency. [Read the full story at CBS 62 Detroit.](#)

#### **[Governor Appoints Rhonda Lahm to Lead Department of Motor Vehicles \(Nebraska\)](#)**

Gov. Dave Heineman has announced that he has appointed Rhonda Lahm to be the Director of the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles. Lahm, 54, has a Bachelor of Science Degree from Nebraska Wesleyan University and a Master's Degree in Management and Leadership from Doane College. Lahm has served in state government for thirty-two years with over fifteen years in management and supervisory positions. She will start at DMV on February 1. Lahm currently serves as the Records Manager for the State Patrol. She was commissioned as an officer with the Nebraska State Patrol in June in 1983. Her first assignment as an officer was in the Field Services Division in Lexington where she also worked as a drug investigator and Drug Abuse Resistance Education Officer. In 1993, she was promoted to Sergeant and relocated to Lincoln where she served as a supervisor at the Training Academy and later in the Field Services Division. Lahm then served as the agency liaison to the Nebraska Unicameral and Governor's Office. In 2001 she was promoted to Captain in the Field Services Division. Her responsibilities included overseeing the Aviation Support and Police Service Dog Divisions of the Nebraska State Patrol. In 2006 she was promoted to the rank of Major of Administrative Services. In 2009 she served as a Driver License Examiner for the DMV. Lahm will succeed Director Bev Neth who recently accepted a position as CEO with the National Safety Council Nebraska in Omaha. [Read the Governor's press release.](#) *Welcome and congratulations Rhonda! And good luck to Bev in her new gig!*



#### **[Nebraska Teen Drivers Can Now Apply for a License or Permit Online](#)**

The DMV has announced that the online driver license services at ClickDMV.ne.gov have been expanded to include teen driver school permit, provisional operator's permit, and first-time driver license online applications for those individuals previously holding a school permit or provisional operator's permit. The new teen online drivers license services provide the convenience of applying for a license or permit anytime and anywhere; avoiding the hassle of waiting in line or missing school or work. The new online service was implemented in conjunction with the DMV's new electronic waiver system being used by the Driver Safety Schools across Nebraska. In addition to the new online teen driver license services, the design of ClickDMV was enhanced to provide a better mobile experience. In 2012, nearly 10% of those visiting the ClickDMV site used a mobile device – more than double the mobile use rate in 2011. The Department of Motor Vehicles plans to migrate its remaining online services to the new mobile-friendly design throughout 2013. [Read the full story at FortMillTimes.com.](#)

### **State Considers Tougher Laws for Teen Drivers** *(South Dakota)*

Teens soon could be facing more restrictions on when and how they can drive cars as legislators try to tackle a teen driver death rate that ranks among the highest in the country. Members of a legislative task force appointed in 2011 will propose four bills to the Legislature, targeting drivers younger than 16. If passed, the bills would make it illegal for drivers with instruction permits or restricted minor permits to use electronic devices while driving. They'd be barred from carrying more than one passenger at a time, with exceptions for school and family events. It also would take more time with instruction permits before teens could receive a restricted permit. Finally, one of the bills would create a statewide coordinator for driver's education, with the aim of developing "standardized curriculum" and standards for driver's ed teachers. In South Dakota now, teens can get an instruction permit at age 14, letting them drive with adult supervision. If they hold that instruction permit without violations for 180 days, they can get a restricted permit. This lets them drive, with parental permission, between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. At age 16, the teen can get a normal driver's license with no special restrictions. The bills will come before committees for testimony and debate during the legislative session. [Read the full story in the Argus Leader.](#)

## **Region IV News**

### **Amy Erickson Announced New Director of Alaska DMV**

Amy Erickson has been selected to fill the position of Director at the Alaska DMV after outgoing Director Whitney Brewster accepted a position with the Texas DMV in July 2012. "Amy's extensive background in intergovernmental coordination and administrative leadership will serve the Alaska DMV well in its mission to provide fast, efficient and consistent services to Alaskans" said Commissioner Becky Hultberg of the Alaska Department of Administration. Before accepting the position at the DMV, Erickson worked as the administrative director for U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, as a liaison for state and federal issues. She also served as a legislative and committee aide in the Alaska Legislature for several years, giving Erickson considerable experience that will benefit DMV, an agency that must navigate and administer federal, state and local laws. Erickson noted that "the Alaska DMV has made great strides over the last decade to better serve Alaskans and I'm excited to continue the many advances our agency is working towards while maintaining and executing our core mission for the residents of our state. If you travel to many other states, you will come to truly appreciate the responsiveness and professionalism of Alaska's DMV." The Alaska DMV is proud of its high success rate in serving most customers inside of 25 minutes – an amazing feat that breaks the "waiting in line at the DMV" stereotype. Erickson's first day at the Alaska DMV was January 7, 2013. [Welcome and congratulations Amy!](#)

### **DMV Online Business Surged In 2012** *(California)*

Californians conducted more than 11.9 million online transactions during 2012, a 6% increase over 2011. Every online business transaction category increased in 2012 from the previous year. Online vehicle registrations, easily the most popular online transaction, numbered 7,641,999 in 2012. Online driver license renewals were also very popular with a 6.9% increase from 2011 to 647,463. Online driver license records, which the department began offering in 2011, increased over 35% in 2012. In addition, online filings of Notice of Release of Liability jumped 7% to 1,486,003. Self-Service Terminal use surged 62% to 777,688 in 2012, compared to 469,492 in 2011. Online Business Transactions: Driver Record 157,989 to 214,538 (+35.8%); Driver License Renewal 605,746 to 647,463 (+6.9%); ID Card Renewal 10,125 to 33,584 (+231%); Vehicle Registrations 7,624,947 to 7,641,999 (+0.22%); Change of Address 874,313 to 1,048,908 (+20%); Release of Liability 1,389,546 to 1,486,003 (+7%); Personalized License Plates 58,139 to 64,019 (+10%); Self-Service Terminals 469,492 to 773,688 (64.8%). Totals 11,190,297 to 11,910,202 (+6%). [Read the DMV press release.](#)

### **Study Says Flashing Digital Billboards Are Too Distracting** *(California)*

Many drivers say the large digital billboards flashing ads every few seconds along Bay Area freeways are just too bright and too distracting. And they may be right. A Swedish study published in the journal *Traffic Injury Prevention* concludes that digital billboards hold the gaze of drivers longer than two seconds. Previous studies have shown that anything that takes a driver's eyes off the road for longer than two seconds increases the risks of a crash. The report will be presented to a national transportation conference in Washington, D.C., later this month. Last month, a three-judge panel ordered the removal of 100 digital billboards in Los Angeles, and Denver has banned them. FHWA allowed digital signs for the first time in 2007 after concluding they did not pose a significant danger to drivers. But a follow-up report is pending and could be released this year. California has no law banning the billboards and is one of 39 states that allows them. There are more than 1,800 digital billboards nationwide, more than double the number five years ago. Several years ago, a study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute concluded the signs did not pose a danger, but its findings have been challenged by critics. FHWA requires states to regulate the distance between signs and how long one image can remain on screen before changing to another. [Read the full story in \*The Bulletin\*.](#)

### **California Lawmaker Pushes Driver's Licenses For More Illegal Immigrants**

A week after California began issuing driver's licenses to a select group of young illegal immigrants, a state lawmaker has proposed that licenses be provided to many others who are unlawfully in the country. A new state law that took effect Jan. 1 allows driver's licenses to be issued to those given a work permit as part of an Obama administration program that suspends deportation for many people who arrived illegally as children. Now, Assemblyman Luis Alejo has introduced AB 60, which would provide California driver's licenses to anyone who can show they pay taxes, regardless of their immigration status. The bill would allow licenses if someone provides the DMV with a federal individual taxpayer identification number or other document deemed proof of paying taxes. Gov. Jerry Brown signed last year's bill, citing "the unique status of these students," but has voiced concerns about providing licenses to all illegal immigrants. [Read the full story in the \*Los Angeles Times\*.](#)

### **Ashton Kutcher Firm's Suit Against DMV May Proceed, Judge Rules** *(California)*

A judge ruled that a suit filed by Ashton Kutcher's television production company can move forward against the California DMV for allegedly backing out of a deal to participate in a reality show based on the agency. Catalyst Media is suing the state for \$1.44 million, claiming it allowed the company access to the DMV to produce a half-hour reality show featuring daily life inside the state agency but then reneged on the deal. Kutcher's company alleges breach of contract and cites money the company spent on preproduction. After a tentative ruling Friday, Superior Court Michael Johnson on Monday officially allowed the case to move forward. The suit filed by attorney Marty Singer's law firm on behalf of the company says Catalyst negotiated in 2010 with the DMV "to capture the variously humorous, emotional, dramatic, moving, humanizing and entertaining situations that arise on a daily basis" in DMV offices. The DMV committed in writing to the show in June 2010, according to the lawsuit filed last week. In May 2011, the production company "executed a formal written agreement" with the DMV to provide access for filming in the summer and fall of 2011 of four initial episodes with an option of six more, the suit says. According to court papers, the DMV publicly acknowledged plans for the show in newspaper stories published in August. Based on the DMV agreement, Catalyst struck a deal with TruTV to broadcast the show, the lawsuit says. But the lawsuit claims "just six weeks after signing its agreement, DMV abruptly and without justification, changed course. In a five-sentence letter to Catalyst producer Jason Goldberg, the DMV simply declared the DMV no longer considered the aeries to be in its 'best interests' and would therefore 'not be moving forward on such a project.' " The DMV has declined to comment



on the litigation. Another company that was working on the project, Soda & Pop Inc., also is suing the DMV. [Read the full story in the LA Times.](#)

### **Bill May Recoup Lost Gas Tax Revenue (Oregon)**

Drivers of certain fuel-efficient vehicles who skirt paying a gas tax at the pump may have to pitch in to fund the state's roads. The state Legislature is expected to consider a bill that would require drivers with a vehicle getting at least 55 miles per gallon of gasoline or equivalent to pay a tax per mile after 2015. Drivers would also have the option of paying a flat amount annually. Exactly what the rate per mile would be is up to lawmakers to decide in the upcoming legislative session. That part of the bill was intentionally left blank. Oregonians currently pay 30 cents per gallon, a tax that is added at the pump. Lawmakers created a Road User Fee Task Force in 2001 to find a new revenue system to offset a drop in gas tax revenue. The group began looking at charging certain drivers per mile and launched a second pilot project in 2012 that tested the idea. Under the pilot, about 50 participants in Oregon paid 1.56 cents per mile and received a credit for the gas tax they paid at the pump. Participants, which mainly included transportation officials and lawmakers, chose from five plans with different ways to track miles driven and pay their bill. They could report miles driven using a smartphone application, a geographic positioning system device or a reporting device without GPS. Participants could also pay a flat annual charge or opt out of using a gadget in the vehicle to record miles. Pilot participants said the plans were easy to sign up for and the device accurately recorded their miles. Passing the bill would require a three-fifths majority. [Read the full story in the Statesman Journal.](#)

### **Oregon Supreme Court Allows Continued Use Of Random License Plate Checks**

Police officers in Oregon can continue to use random license plate checks as a law enforcement tool. That's the upshot of a decision issued Thursday by the Oregon Supreme Court. Have you ever been stopped at a red light and noticed a police car in your rearview mirror? There's a good chance that officer is running your license plate number through his or her computer. In seconds a state database can show if everything's kosher about your car. If not, you'll probably get pulled over. That's what happened to two Oregon men who were separately arrested for driving with a suspended license after officers ran their plates. Their attorney, Kenneth Kreuzer, argued that such random checks are unconstitutional searches. There's a problem that we see in society when government, police and state actors are more and more intruding in people's private lives without justification." But the Oregon Supreme Court was evenly divided on the question. The result is that a lower court's ruling stands that random license plate checks are legal. [Read the full story in Northwest News Network.](#)

### **Regina Police Use New System To Catch Drunk Drivers (Saskatchewan)**

Regina police officers are changing the way they track down drunk drivers in the city and it's already making a difference, officials say. A few months ago, they decided to get rid of checkstops, which they call static enforcement, and instead go mobile. Checkstops are not only time consuming, but are red flags for people trying to avoid being stopped, especially with people posting checkstop locations on social media sites. Now officers are working hand-in-hand with Report Impaired Drivers, a program that encourages other drivers to call if they suspect there's an impaired driver on the road. Police have a handful of cars that are roaming the city each night, with the goal of finding drunk drivers. With the new system, Regina police have charged 103 people with impaired driving in December of last year alone. In Saskatoon, where officers are still using checkstops, 37 impaired drivers were charged in December. The department in Regina said the sample size may be small so far, but the roaming system will be the way they do things for a while. [Read the full story at CBC News.](#)

### **Utah License Plate Scanners Spark Legislative Debate**

License plate scanners in widespread use by law enforcement agencies hold the potential for misuse by divorce lawyers or police who use information on a motorist's whereabouts as fodder for an "interrogation game," a Utah legislator said Friday. Utah has no law governing the use, collection or lifespan of tracking data on motorists who have done no wrong, said Sen. Todd Weiler. He plans to introduce legislation in January to make clear the information cannot be kept in a databank longer than six months, or subpoenaed in divorce or other civil litigation. License plate readers are cameras used by police to get information about a person or a vehicle from a car's license plate. Some of them use special software to run the license plate number through national criminal databases to check for outstanding warrants. Police said they've recovered stolen vehicles using license plate readers and can immediately flag unregistered or uninsured motorists. Utah sheriffs have told legislators that scanner information kept for long periods can help solve homicides or kidnappings. Law enforcement agencies in Utah are keeping data for up to two years. Beaver County Sheriff Cameron Noel thinks the legislation is unnecessary. The information should be available to police for as long as needed. His county doesn't have any license plate readers, but he said they would be useful on southern Utah highways to catch murderers, rapist, kidnappers and drug smugglers. "It's like any tool out there: If it's abused, our rights are going to be violated," Noel said. "But you have to have some trust in law enforcement to do the right thing." [Read the full story in the Insurance Journal.](#)

### **Licensing Office Customer Wait Times Lowest In Eight Years (Washington)**

Driver licensing offices across the state are experiencing some of the lowest customer wait times in eight years due to service innovations *including* expanded online and mail-in options and allowing qualifying driver training schools to conduct driver testing. The average statewide wait time at licensing service offices in December was 10 minutes.

Driver licensing offices are maintaining the best wait times in eight years, despite an 11% increase in licensed drivers, and the closing and consolidation of several licensing offices over this time period. Only 12% of the customers visiting DOL offices are currently waiting more than 30 minutes. About 90% of licensing service offices are meeting or exceeding the agency goal of customers waiting 30 minutes or less. Over the past several years, DOL has expanded online offerings to citizens, reducing or eliminating the need for them to come to a driver licensing office. In 2012, nearly one-quarter of the agency's 3.4 million driver transactions were done by people who didn't step foot inside an office—by mail or Internet. In five years, that percentage has grown from 5% to 23%. [Read the DOL press release.](#)

### **State Wants to Study Charging Drivers by the Mile As Gas Taxes Shrink (Washington)**

Facing steep declines in gas-tax revenues that pay for road repairs, Washington is exploring a creative solution: charging drivers by the mile to use state highways and roads. A committee of transportation experts recently concluded it's feasible to move the state away from gasoline taxes to a "pay as you go" road-fee system. "Now we're questioning: Is it acceptable for Washington, and if so, in what form?" state Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond said. More than a dozen states have studied the idea, but so far no state has implemented it widely. Between 2007 and 2023, fuel-tax revenues are projected to fall by more than \$5 billion, state estimates show. Last year, the Legislature charged a steering committee with studying whether a road-user fee was possible and with recommending next steps. The state Transportation Commission is expected to finalize the committee's report later this month and ask state lawmakers for about \$1.6 million in the 2013-15 budget to study how the idea would work. Hammond said it could be 10 years before the state implements any sort of road-user fee. Still to be debated is how the fee would be charged — by miles driven, time spent on the road or another alternative, and how mileage would be reported or collected. Options for collecting mileage include annual odometer readings, smartphone apps and equipping cars with GPS devices to track miles driven. The last is likely to raise protests from those concerned about privacy issues. [Read the full story in the Seattle Times.](#)

## Other News of Interest

### **Dock-N-Lock Unveils New Distracted Driving Solution at the 2013 International CES**

Dock-n-Lock LLC, a Charlotte, NC based start-up, released to the public this week a glimpse of a distracted driving solution sure to turn some heads, especially those who are parents of teen drivers. The solution looks like a radio with one special feature. The driver's phone must be "docked and locked" inside the device before the car can be driven. While the car is moving, the cell phone is locked away, and therefore no longer a distraction or temptation to the driver. Distracted driving accidents have reached alarming numbers. Over 1 million accidents in 2012 were directly related to dangerous cell phone use while driving according to NHTSA. With motor vehicle accidents the number one cause of death for ages 15-20, and cell phones ingrained in everything we do, this combination has become deadly. [Read the full story at Fox19.com.](#)

### **Toyota Pursues 'Co-Pilot' Car Over Self-Driving Vehicle**

Toyota Motor Corp. is developing autonomous safety technologies to create a virtual "co-pilot" in vehicles that helps drivers avoid accidents rather than self-driving cars and trucks. The carmaker unveiled research it's doing in Japan with a modified Lexus LS sedan fitted with advanced safety equipment this week. The car has sensors and automated systems to observe, process and respond to its surroundings. Toyota and competitors already offer cars with features including cruise control that monitors and maintains a safe distance from vehicles ahead, sensors to warn of swerving out of a lane, and automated braking triggered when a vehicle doesn't slow enough to avoid impact. Improvements in such areas, rather than cars that fully drive themselves, are Toyota's near-term priority. Toyota has no plans for now to sell a self-driving vehicle. A Toyota spokesman said "We believe the technology should make the driver better and that it should not be a driverless car." Toyota said its test vehicle is a "platform" to develop systems to aid driver awareness of traffic conditions, enabling motorists to make better decisions and improve driving skills. [Read the full story at Bloomberg.com.](#)

## About Monopoly. . . did you know . . .

- *It is estimated that more than 1 billion people have played the game of Monopoly since 1935.*
- *The game of Monopoly is sold in 111 countries, and produced in 43 languages.*
- *Over 6 billion little green houses, and 2 billion red hotels, have been produced since the game was introduced in 1935.*
- *The Monopoly games mascot, Rich Uncle Pennybags, is intended to be a representation of the late financier, J. P. Morgan. However the monopoly game mascot is now called Mr. Monopoly.*
- *Parker Brothers suggests that the game can be played in 45 minutes, but most games take longer. Some record game lengths: In a tree house - 286 hours; In a bath tub - 99 hours; Underground - 100 hours; Upside Down - 66 hours; Longest game on record - 70 days.*
- *Parker Brothers once sent an armored car with one million dollars of Monopoly play money to a marathon game in Pittsburg that had run out of funds.*
- *The most expensive version of the game was produced by celebrated San Francisco jeweler Sidney Mobell. Valued at \$2 million, the set features a 23-carat gold board and diamond-studded dice.*
- *In 1978, the Neiman Marcus Christmas catalog offered a chocolate version of the game for \$600.*