

As a result of my article last week on the lack of Police traffic enforcement, RisJai sent me the following, “I drove from Port of Spain to San Fernando and I have a few observations. There isn't a policeman in sight! Drivers are modifying their vehicles. They are cutting their springs and installing low profile tires as low as 30 series. These 'low' cars can cause accidents as they stop suddenly to negotiate a hump or other rough patch on the road.

“Drivers are installing extremely bright fog lamps. These lights are even brighter than the headlamps – most likely LEDs. They totally blind you. Allowable wattage of bulbs cannot be used anymore as LEDs produce more light at a lower wattage. We need to look at Lumens.

“At least we are seeing less heavy 5% tints and lettering on the glass, that block the driver's view of the road.

“Another nuisance is the loud music you can hear a mile away. I had such a system in my car and I could not hear the ambulance approaching, and I had it at a lower volume. The subwoofers also shake your house as the car passes by and triggers off car alarms.

“Guys are also cutting off the silencers and replacing it with a tube that makes the exhaust sound very loud. I saw the item in the auto shop. They say it 'gives your car a manly sound'.

“Some of these rear spoilers are quite huge, almost like plane wings. I have seen some that actually block the rear glass.

“Is Licensing [Authority] looking at these developments? It has been going on for years. The black diesel smoke has finally subsided as I guess the foreign-used engines have finally 'conked out' and it would be too expensive to replace. Was it a good idea to allow

any car to change their engine to diesel?

“Lastly there are trucks and pickups with loose stones and debris in the tray that fly and crack your windscreen.

“These are just a few observations from a short drive.”

I am sure that many other road users could give similar and other examples of unconcern for the motor vehicle and road traffic rules.

Some of the more interesting motor vehicle and road traffic rules include the following:

- Quitting vehicle before applying brakes and switching off engine. How exactly is this checked and enforced?

- Failing to keep vehicle to left on road. Do the Police actually monitor this? What I have seen is that the Police simply put on their lights or sirens or both, and the offending motorist moves over from the right simply, and coolly returns after the police vehicle passes.

- Vehicle carrying unsecured load. This is so common it is almost unbelievable that this regulation exists. It would be interesting to learn how many insurance claims are made for damaged windshields due to loose material from trucks.

- Driving vehicle on footpath or pavement. It is very common to see vehicles comfortably parked on sidewalks and footpaths, forcing pedestrians, including the blind and those on wheelchairs, to use the roadway. This is a regulation that should be given priority by the Police, and rigorously enforced, especially as it places the differently abled at additional disadvantage in favour of the auto.

- Statement of fares undisplayed in taxi. Has anybody ever seen this, except those persons above 75 years of age, when even bicycles had permits displayed?

- Goods vehicle carrying excess weight. The effects of vehicle

overloading including, (i) Road damage, and increased maintenance costs; (ii) Safety: steering, tyres, sluggishness, difficulty in overtaking by others; (iii) Traffic capacity reduction: congestion; (iv) Vehicle wear and tear: increased owner/operator costs; and, (v) Air quality, including standards for engine emissions and fuel. How do the authorities check this, except if the alleged offending vehicle is taken to the Licensing Office in Port of Spain, where the only existing weigh scale is presumably correctly calibrated? Why not introduce monitoring with portable weigh scales as in Jamaica?

- Exceeding the specified speed limit. I am almost tired of commenting on this. It is well-known to be the primary cause of road crashes, and yet it is not enforced. Just because of this factor alone, field enforcement of traffic should be removed from the Police and given to a dedicated authority.

- Failing to comply with a traffic sign (excluding an electric automatic signal) or notice authorized by the Licensing Authority or Commissioner of Police, respectively. An example of zero enforcement of this activity is the use of zebra crossing zones. The traffic signing includes road markings and traffic signs, and sometimes wig-wag traffic lights, yet motorists often ignore the pedestrians wishing to cross. Two classic zebra crossing examples come immediately to mind: (a) On Lady Young Road at Second Caledonia, and (b) On Western Main Road at the St James Infirmary. Yes, I recognise that commuters often stand at the edge of the crosswalk to await public transport, and that should also be addressed as part of the enforcement.

- Failing to comply with an electric automatic signal (traffic

light). This is also very common. Sometimes I check up to four vehicles crossing after the traffic signals have already turned red.

- Dangerous driving (\$3,000).

This is the highest fine. But, how often is it enforced?

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