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## New cars could help older drivers

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Herald Writer

Baby boomers, your sweet ride awaits.

Even as you sweat over your 401 (k) and the tough times ahead with housing prices, find solace that the AAA auto club and university researchers have your back.

They've started mapping out the list of extras your next car should have so you can stay comfortably behind the wheel even as you add candles to your birthday cake.

The suggestions are meant for any mature driver, but especially for the many people who are soon to retire and who will be among 40 million drivers over age 65 on the roads by 2020.

Diminished vision, arthritis and reduced reaction times are common conditions that can lead to crashes.

The University of Florida has a national research center on older drivers that teamed up with AAA to list "smart features for mature drivers."

For hip and leg pain: Plan for six-way adjustable power seats and seats that come between the driver's mid-thigh and lower buttocks. This makes it easier to get in and out of the car.

Arthritis: Get a four-door model, thick steering wheels and keyless entry and ignition, power mirrors and seats, and larger dashboard controls with buttons.

Vision problems: Get extendable sun visors, large audio and climate controls, and displays with contrasting text.

What AAA fails to highlight is that new cars will drive themselves by 2020.

Until then, we're stuck behind the wheels of our Toyotas with the Knight Rider theme playing in our heads. For more information, go to [AAA.com/seniors](http://AAA.com/seniors).

### Gas guzzling

Gas prices peaked last week with a new record of \$3.56 in the Everett-Seattle-Bellevue area, according to AAA's fuel gauge report Web site. By Friday, prices were down to a more manageable \$3.53 a gallon. It's still over the record set last year of \$3.46 a gallon.

### 41st Street overpass

Question: Why aren't the lights at the new 41st Street overpass and intersection in Everett on motion detectors? I travel that area late at night and have to sit while the lights cycle through all the directions. I turn onto northbound I-5 and the green arrow always comes on after the green through-light has been on for a while. Seems to me with all the millions spent on this project we could have at least bought state-of-the-art signaling equipment.

*Ian Most, Stanwood*

Answer: Our signal technicians examined the signal and discovered a problem with the signal's control system. We have corrected the problem, and the signal is operating normally.

We have traffic detecting equipment in every direction at the 41st Street overpass and intersection; however, these

motion sensors are not fully operational because this intersection exists within an active construction zone and crews are still working on installing electrical equipment. Once this work is complete, the motion sensors embedded in the roadway will be calibrated to change the signal on demand. That means if there is only one vehicle waiting to turn at the intersection, the traffic detecting equipment will inform the intersection computer that a vehicle is present and adjust the signal timing to accommodate the vehicle.

The traffic signal at the 41st Street interchange controls the traffic flow from all directions. This type of signal is called a single point urban intersection (SPUI). The turn signals on the SPUI are timed to allow maximum traffic from two opposite directions at the same time.

*Connie Lewis, WSDOT spokeswoman*

### **Ask us about traffic**

Have a question about traffic or street rules around Snohomish and Island counties? We can help find an answer. E-mail Street Smarts at [stsmarts@heraldnet.com](mailto:stsmarts@heraldnet.com).

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