



U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline

Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire

To Report Vehicle Safety Defects

1-888-DASH-2-DOT

(1-888-327-4236)

INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 100148

Date Received

8:40

19-OCT-2006

Repository ☐

Reference No.

10171317

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name

Address

City

FORSYTH

State IL

Zip Code

Daytime Telephone Number

E-mail Address

Evening Telephone Number

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle?

In the absence of an _____ your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner

Date 10/27/06

☒ YES

☐ NO

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side

JTNBE46K773

Make

TOYOTA

Model

CAMRY

Model Year

2007

Date Purchased
08-MAR-06

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number
CRCWN TOYOTA

Engine:

No: Cylinders 4

Fuel Type:

Gas

Original Owner

☒

Dealer's City

DECATUR

State

IL

Zip Code

Transmission Type

☒

Antilock Brakes

Powertrain

FRONT WHEEL DRIVE

AUTOMATIC

☒

Cruise Control

Vehicle Component Code

010000 STEERING

Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)
20-AUG-2006

Failure Mileage
3740

Failure Speed

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make

Tire Model (Name or Number)

Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)

DOT No. (Example: DOTM19ABC036)

☐ Original Equipment
☐ Prior Repair

Failure Location:

Tire Component Code

Tire Failure Type

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make:

Date Manufactured:

Model No./Name:

Seat Type:

Installation System:

Child Seat Component Code:

Failed Part:

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), failure(s), crash(es), and injury(ies).)

Crash

☐ Yes

☒ No

Fire

☐ Yes

☒ No

Number of Persons Injured

Number of Deaths

Reported to Police

N

Narrative Description of Incident(S), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).

Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e. parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

DT*: THE CONTACT STATED WHILE DRIVING VARIOUS SPEEDS WHEN TURNING OR HITTING A BUMP, A NOISE WAS HEARD IN THE STEERING COLUMN AND THE WHEEL FELT LOOSE. THE VEHICLE WAS DRIVEN TO THE DEALER WHO REPLACED THE INTERMEDIATE SHAFT IN THE POWER STEERING.

See attached Exhibits 1-6

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

The Privacy Act of 1974-Public Law 93-579 This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a Manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

1. On October 19, 2006 I reported a steering rod problem with my 2007 Camry to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (reference #10171317).
2. Background information:
 - a. I had experienced a similar problem with my 2004 Solara (Camry). I purchased the car new on September 5, 2003 and I noticed the problem in October, 2004. It took Toyota about four months to get a replacement part because I was told they were replacing the steering shafts in the order the complaints were received. Toyota never issued a recall notice or officially acknowledged the problem. See Exhibit 1.
 - b. In August, 2006 I experienced the same problem steering problem with my "redesigned" 2007 Camry which I purchased new on March 8, 2006. I did not receive any recall notice from Toyota. The problem was fixed by replacing the steering intermediate shaft on August 23, 2006. See Exhibit 2.
 - c. I documented my concerns in a letter to the President of Toyota Motor Sales, USA Inc. dated September 5, 2006. See Exhibit 3.
 - d. I did not receive a response so on September 21, 2006 I called Toyota Customer Service, explained the problem as outlined in my letter and was given Case [REDACTED]. They had no record of receiving my letter so I faxed another copy of my September 5 letter to Customer Service. I waited until October 9, 2006 and followed up with another telephone call. I was told a letter was in the mail dated October 7, 2006. See Exhibit 4.
 - e. I received Toyota's letter on October 16, 2006. The letter did not address any of my concerns nor explain how a problem in a 2004 Toyota could still show up in a 2007 "redesigned" Toyota. See Exhibit 5.
 - f. In the same week the steering intermediate shaft was fixed on my 2007 Camry I saw a front page article in the Wall Street Journal (August 25, 2006) about quality problems Toyota was encountering. Ironically, as the owner of two new Camry's in a three year span, I never received any notification from Toyota of a steering problem which I consider a very important safety issue. See Exhibit 6.

[REDACTED]
Forsyth, IL [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (Home)
[REDACTED]

EXHIBIT 3

[REDACTED]
Forsyth, IL [REDACTED]
September 5, 2006

President
Toyota Motor Sales, USA Inc
19001 South Western Avenue
Torrance, CA 90501

RE: 2007 Camry Steering Problem

Dear Sir:

I am taking the liberty of addressing this letter directly to you because of what I consider a serious and legitimate concern regarding a safety issue with your new redesigned 2007 Camry.

On March 8, 2006 I traded my 2004 Solara for a redesigned 2007 Camry. My primary reason for replacing the Solara was the steering problem I experienced. After a long waiting period for the replacement part (intermediate shaft) the car was fixed. However, since this problem was related to the steering wheel I was always apprehensive about the safety of my Solara. As a long-time owner of Toyota vehicles this was the first time I experienced an issue with the safety and reliability of the car.

To my dismay after about three months of use, my newly redesigned 2007 Camry developed the same steering problem and the intermediate shaft had to be replaced. The work was done on August 23, 2006. (See attachment) Ironically, the following day I saw a front page article in the Wall Street Journal talking about quality problems Toyota was experiencing. Although the 2004 Solara/ Camry steering problem was commonly known by the dealerships I never received a recall notice from Toyota. I had to wait for several months before the part was available because I was told they were replacing the steering shafts in the order the complaints were received. This indicates to me that the problem was much larger than just a few cars.

Safety and reliability of Toyota cars have been the top reasons for my continued loyalty and overall satisfaction with Toyota. Since 1989 my family and I have owned Toyota cars all purchased new from our local Toyota dealership. Currently, we have a 2003 Camry, 2003 Highlander, 2005 Solara and 2007 Camry. I am very much impressed and satisfied with the redesigned features of the 2007 Camry. I am looking forward to seeing the redesigned Highlander which my dealership says will be available in the spring of 2007.

My question to you is how could the 2007 Camry be totally redesigned and still have a prevailing major problem with steering shaft. This shakes my confidence in Toyota's safety and quality control of their most popular car. (I am also very concerned because I have a daughter driving the 2005 Solara. I recommended that she purchase this car prior to discovering the problem with my 2004 Solara. Will this steering problem jeopardize her safety?)

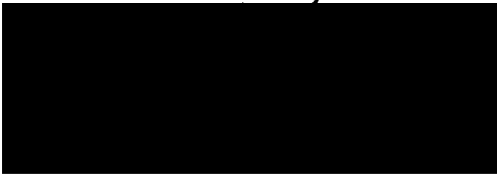
President

-2-

September 5, 2006

My instincts tell me you do not want to lose the confidence and loyalty of a long-time customer. My future decisions regarding automobile purchases will hinge on how this issue is handled by Toyota. I will appreciate hearing from you or your representative in the near future.

Sincerely,



Attachment: 8/21/06 Service Invoice

EXHIBIT 4

[REDACTED]

From: Ask Toyota [toyota_cares@toyota.com]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2006 11:48 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Case [REDACTED]

Recently you contacted Toyota. Below is a summary of your contact message and our response.

Thank you for allowing us to be of service to you.

Subject

Case [REDACTED]

Discussion Thread

Response (Anita)

09/27/2006 09:47 AM

Thank you for contacting Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.

We appreciate the time you have taken to contact us.

Our mailing address is:

Toyota Motor Sales USA
19001 South Western Avenue, Dept. WC11
Torrance, CA 90509
Attn: Customer Relations

Fax: 310-468-7814 If we may be of further assistance, please contact us via email or by calling 800-331-4331. We are available from 5 AM to 6 PM, Pacific Time, Monday through Friday.

We have documented your comments at our National Headquarters under file [REDACTED]

Toyota Customer Experience

Customer [REDACTED]

09/21/2006 06:50 PM

Following my conversation with Nicole I tried to attach a copy of my September 5, 2006 letter to this email but did not find a way to get my letter attached to this email. It is hard for me to understand that your system did not have my complaint on file as of this morning. Please provide me with a FAX number so that I can furnish you with a copy of the letter I mailed on September 5th.

Follow-up

- FAXED copy of Info sent to Toyota President after speaking to Nicole on 9/21/06 at 2pm
(at Toyota Customer Service)
- Called Toyota Customer Service on 10/9/06 and spoke to DAVON. Repeat my story again but no resolution

9/27/2006

EXHIBIT 5

TOYOTA

Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.
19001 South Western Avenue, WC11
Torrance, CA 90501
800 331-4331
310 468-7814 Fax

October 7, 2006

[REDACTED]
Forsyth, IL [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for contacting us regarding 2007 Camry.

Toyota makes every effort to manufacture a quality product, conducting extensive research and planning, thorough testing, and constant monitoring of performance. Consumer opinion and perception also play an active role in our ongoing efforts to lead the automobile industry in quality, innovation, styling, and reliability.

It is through such communications as yours that we become aware of the reactions and expectations of our customers and we appreciate your comments. We were sorry to learn of your dissatisfaction with the steering in the 2007 Camry and wish to assure you that your opinion and concerns are important to us.

Toyota values you as a customer and we sincerely appreciate the time you have taken to call.

Sincerely,

Kristi Gohn

Kristi Gohn
Toyota Customer Experience

*Spoke with Kristie
on 10/16/06 @ 5pm. She explained
technical problem
documented in
Service Bulletin but
would not provide
copy
ERIN HELLMER, Supervisor
Toyota Customer Service Center
called on 10/17/06 @ 5:40 pm.
will not provide the document
that defines the problem and
fix for it.*

August 25, 2006

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Toyota May Delay New Models To Address Rising Quality Issues

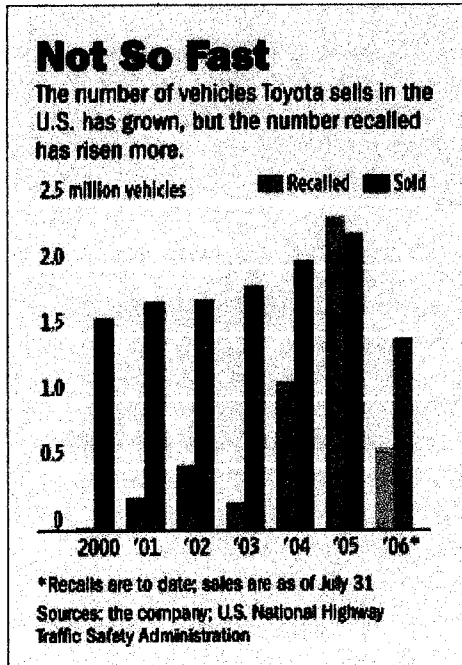
By NORIHIKO SHIROUZU
August 25, 2006; Page A1

Toyota Motor Corp., jarred by a surge of recalls and quality problems, is considering tapping the brakes on its ambitious growth plans, delaying introductions of some new models by as much as half a year, people familiar with the matter say.

Toyota has been accelerating its growth world-wide and moving to overtake **General Motors Corp.** as the world's No. 1 auto maker. In May, the company said capital expenditures in the current fiscal year would reach a record of roughly \$14 billion. But the fast-paced expansion has come with a cost: an increasing number of quality problems in North America, Japan and elsewhere that threaten to dent its quality image.

According to senior executives and engineers familiar with the move, the company is considering adding as much as three to six more months to projects that normally call for roughly two to three years of development lead time, in order to stem the growing tide of quality problems. Those individuals say that while some programs would be spared, delays likely would affect a relatively wide range of projects. Among the high-volume models that could be affected are the next Sienna minivan, Solara sports coupe and Avalon sedan.

Toyota's chief spokesman, Shigeru Hayakawa, declined to comment, saying product-development lead times and the specific timing of product launches are "competitive" information. "It's our basic stance that we introduce products in a timely manner while meeting changing needs of the market," he said. "That general



direction remains unchanged."

Toyota's rethinking of its fast-paced new-model strategy comes as the Japanese auto giant's sales around the world, and in the U.S., are increasing rapidly. So is the number of Toyota vehicles being recalled for quality problems.

Last year in the U.S. -- its largest market by volume -- Toyota recalled 2.38 million vehicles, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. That's more than the 2.26 million it sold. Overall, the company sold nearly eight million vehicles world-wide.

This year, the company has recalled 628,000 vehicles in the U.S., and people familiar with

the matter say it may soon recall an additional half-million vehicles. The latest recall would affect the current generation of the Sienna minivan, because of concern that poorly designed locking devices for rear seats may fail to securely anchor them to the vehicle floor.

Recalls also are on the rise in Japan, Toyota's second-largest market, where police and prosecutors are investigating possible professional negligence for shirking recalls for eight years. Investigators are looking at whether a suspected faulty steering part on the Hilux Surf recreational vehicle may have caused an August 2004 head-on crash that injured five people. The Japanese government has reprimanded the company and called for improved recall practices in the wake of the police probe.

For the most part, Toyota's recalls have involved relatively minor issues and nearly all have been voluntary actions by the company, not the kind in which consumer complaints prod the government into action, says manufacturing guru James Womack, chairman of the Lean Enterprise Institute in Cambridge, Mass.

Many analysts say the recent rise in recalls may not cause consumers to avoid Toyota cars at all. Despite the rise in recalls, third-party quality surveys by J.D. Power & Associates and Consumer Reports continue to rank Toyota high in initial and medium-term vehicle quality and reliability.

Still, Toyota has painstakingly built a reputation for superior quality over the past three decades, and the soaring number of recalls has been highly embarrassing for its management. At a news conference last month, Toyota President Katsuaki Watanabe offered an elaborate apology.

"I take this seriously and see it as a crisis," Mr. Watanabe said. He then bowed deeply in front of the cameras, adding, "I want to apologize deeply for the troubles we have caused."

Though not final, a move to slow product cycles would mark a step back from an aggressive strategy for global expansion set in motion in the mid-1990s by then-President Hiroshi Okuda.

The strategy called for engineers to pump out more vehicles to fuel the company's growth around the world. Product-development bosses kept engineers on tight launch schedules. Toyota also began relying more heavily on computer-aided design tools to radically compress vehicle-development times by skipping steps such as making physical prototypes to test components.

Using these high-tech tools, Toyota cut new-model development time to as short as about two years -- compared with three or four years in the past. According to officials at the Toyota product-development and engineering center in Ann Arbor, Mich., virtual-engineering tools have helped the company slash the number of prototypes it builds per project to fewer than 20 from 60.

But the new approach, which allowed its main advocate Yoshio Shirai, a senior managing director, to gain a seat on Toyota's board, is now suspected of contributing to the recent rash of embarrassing quality glitches.

Additionally, Toyota executives and engineers say, some mistakes are happening because computer-aided engineering tools have limitations that allow potential design flaws to slip through. Others point to increased use of parts designed by outside suppliers like Delphi Corp. that aren't part of the traditional circle of Toyota partners in Japan.

A slowdown would follow a set of actions announced by the company after the Japanese government's reprimand of its recall policies. In a report submitted to the government, Toyota said it would upgrade a new data network for sharing technical information and product-quality reports from customers in order to handle recalls more efficiently. It also will increase staff at its quality-control headquarters.

Earlier this year, Mr. Watanabe named two executive vice presidents -- including Akio Toyoda, a scion of the auto conglomerate's founding family -- as quality chiefs to oversee various initiatives for building more quality into components and vehicle design.

Inside the company, spending more time doing quality-assurance tests on new and redesigned cars under development is seen as vital to in regaining control of quality, say individuals close to the matter.

By delaying introductions of some products, Toyota would conduct more quality

checks on components and, in some cases, create more prototypes to make sure thousands of parts and systems that comprise a typical car work as intended and verify their durability, these people say.

Toyota also is accelerating an application of what it describes as "preventive engineering" -- an approach the auto maker has been implementing since the late 1990s to forecast problem areas based on engineering knowledge accumulated over the years and using extra caution in designing those areas.

The approach is based on the idea that most components of today's cars are proven technologies, and that most problems occur when, for example, engineers combine two or more parts to create a component system. Toyota engineers focus most of their attention on those "interface" areas to predict problems that might develop.

Toyota executives and engineers say one factor behind the rise in recalls is the company's recent strategy to use the same components in a wider range of vehicles to save costs. Often when a component is found defective, it is found on not just one or two models but several products sold across the globe -- a factor that explains in part why the number of vehicles affected by a recall often is well more than half a million.

Toyota also has made what one engineer describes as a "clear and conscious change" in the way it handles recalls in the wake of a painful scandal involving an alleged coverup of vehicle defects by Japan's **Mitsubishi Motors Corp.** a few years ago, which crippled sales and drove Mitsubishi to the brink of collapse.

"We used to do quiet recalls called 'service campaigns' to deal with many defects, but we're not going to hide anything any more," said one senior engineer. "Most of the known defects and issues are now handled through recalls."

Still, the fast pace of new-model launches -- and pressure to keep product launches on schedule -- has given rise to what another senior engineer calls "bonehead" mistakes.

In Japan this year, for instance, Toyota discovered it had made the rear axle of one sport-utility vehicle with the material used for another SUV. Designs for the two rear axles are almost identical, but the metal materials used to produce them are different enough that mixing the parts up caused concern over the strength of the axle. A Toyota spokesman said there was a question of the strength of the axle but declined to elaborate.

Write to Norihiko Shirouzu at norihiko.shirouzu@wsj.com¹

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<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB115644337137844667.html>

Hyperlinks in this Article:

(1) <mailto:norihiko.shirouzu@wsj.com>

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