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Alamogordo, NM [REDACTED]
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5 May 2019

Consumer Reports
Auto Test Center
Attn: Jake Fisher
101 Truman Ave.
Yonkers, NY 10703

Dear Consumer Reports,

I am the owner of a 2018 VW Passat SE TSI, VIN #1VWBA7A32J [REDACTED]. This letter is in response to your article in May 2019 Consumer Reports, pages 54 through 58, "Can We Save More Lives?" VW, NHTSA, and Consumer Reports have been recipients of my letters dated 23 February and 21 March 2019 regarding the "safety features" on the vehicle I own and their sloppy operation.

Since CR advocates that "safety features" such as Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC), Automatic Emergency Brakes (AEB), Forward Collision Warning (FCW), and others should be "standard" on all cars and not "options" for which the buyer pays extra, I will make some suggestions.

On page 54, second column, "CR believes that systems with AEB ... FCW ... Blind Spot Warning (BSW) should come standard on all models because they save lives." I think CR needs proof to make that statement. It has been my experience that ACC/AEB is a "safety hazard" due to application of the brakes by the car's computer when I, the driver, think it's unnecessary. The AEB is a nuisance and likely will cause an accident rather than prevent it when the vehicle in back of my car slams into my rear. CR needs to test these features in their review of each car to determine that the car's ACC, FCW, AEB operates logically. In my opinion, they do not in the 2018 VW Passat that I own.

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On page 54, third column, "In theory, a robot driven car doesn't fall asleep or get drunk. It doesn't make human mistakes." Boy, do I disagree; the robot driven car WILL make mistakes because the algorithm to control the car is written by a human being. Every situation on the roadway is different, and writing an algorithm with the thought that 'one size fits all' isn't going to apply in 100% of the situations.

On page 54, fourth column, "The National Transportation Safety Board ... In 2001 it asked NHTSA to develop regulations that require FCW and adaptive cruise control." Requiring this stuff won't solve a safety problem if the software that's written to determine when to slow the vehicle or put on the brakes is poorly written. Just mandating these "features" be put on a car doesn't mean it has to work properly.

On page 56, first column bottom, "Automakers compete with one another to produce the safest vehicles, ..." I'm going to guess automakers will advertise they have this feature and that feature, but they don't necessarily have to work worth a darn. As long as they have them, fulfill a government requirement, and keep up with the Joneses, everything is just fine.

On page 58, first column, "Most states ban driver texting, ... The NTSB has called for a ban on the use of handheld devices while driving." Indeed, this is a massive peeve that I, too, have with people on cell phones while driving. Laws aren't going to fix this situation - I guarantee it. The way to fix the problem is to disable the phone while in a moving car or walking down the sidewalk as an oblivious pedestrian walking into a crosswalk against a red light. Let the phone's GPS determine that the phone is moving above 2 mph or some number that indicates the phone is underway, and therefore drops a voice connection, disables text operation, or drops a data connection. Then the only way the phone will operate is if it's moving at zero mph. All phones can have this done automatically when updates to a cell phone's OS are downloaded and installed.

But, getting back to my thesis regarding "safety features," particularly the ones in my vehicle, I am convinced that the people who design the car don't drive the car. Otherwise, they'd see the sloppy operation of ACC, FCW, and AEB. I am convinced that the people who build the car don't drive car. I'm convinced the people who sell the car don't drive the car because they'd see the bugs in the "safety features." I'm annoyed that I have to live with these "safety features" because there's no way to permanently disable ACC, FCW, and AEB as can be done in a Toyota Camry or a Mazda 6. And it doesn't help that the VW dealer who sold me the car won't (or doesn't know how to) disable ACC, FCW, and AEB

because he "assumes liability" for doing so if I were to be involved in a future accident. I'm not convinced of his argument.

If Consumer Reports is going to request the government mandate these "safety features" be shoved down the buyer's throat, CR should test each vehicle's "safety features" to determine efficacy from just plain window dressing or advertising gimmick. The car I own has a back up camera because the government mandated it as of May 2018. It has to be there, but it doesn't have to work worth a darn, and mine doesn't.

Auto manufacturers are increasingly adding "features" to the vehicle's console. I refer to the console as a "toy box" provided by which ever maker wants to include the most toys (distractions) into the console to entertain the driver/passenger while zinging down the I-state at 70 mph (or 80 in some western states), thus diverting attention from the driving process. I opine that when distracted by the toy box, the operation of AEB or FCW will startle the person behind the wheel enough to create an accident situation.

I get the sensation that with the addition of these "safety features" that we human drivers are being used as lab rats for the driverless car industry. The industry experiments such that if they can get the "safety features" to work in a vehicle with a human driver, they should then be able to extrapolate that knowledge to plug into a driverless vehicle. It should be a wild west encounter when vehicles with human drivers share the road with driverless vehicles.

If Consumer Reports insists on mandating ACC, FCW, AEB "safety features," it should also mandate a provision to allow the driver to permanently disable those features if the driver deems their operation to be hazardous. Yup, the driver will assume full liability for his actions if that's done, just like we did in "the olden days" before computers and algorithms interfered in our lives.

Thank you for reading my letter.

Regards,



cc: NHTSA

cc: Sisbarro Autoworld, Inc.

cc: USAA Automobile Insurance

cc: Volkswagen Group of America, Inc.



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