

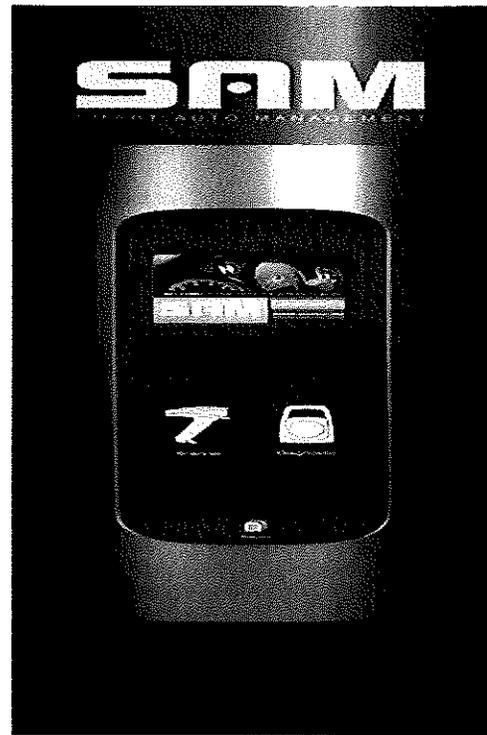
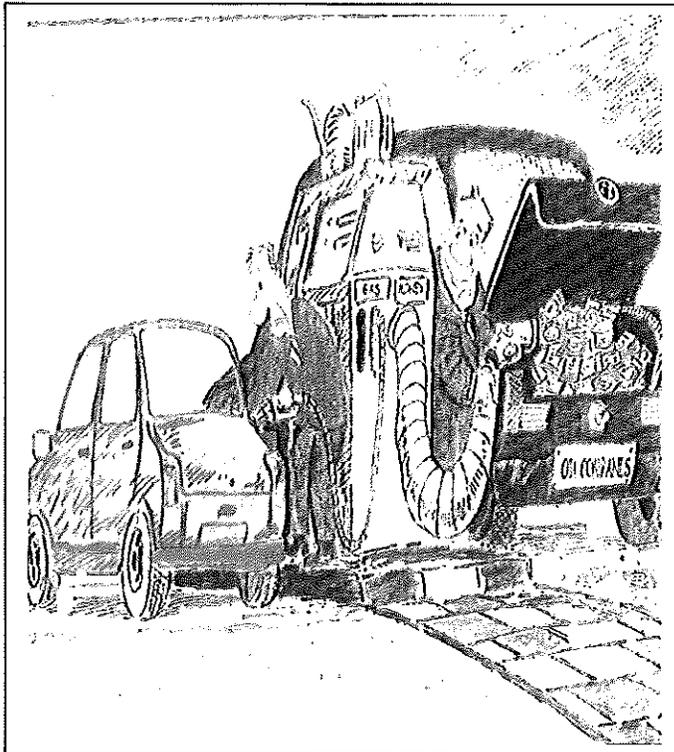


**GASOLINE & AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE
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Our Members are responsible for selling over 60% of the 1.6 billion gallons of gasoline sold annually in the State of Connecticut!



Say NO to SAM!

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

By Michael J. Fox, Executive Director

March 11, 2009

Senator DeFronzo & Representative Guerrero and members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Michael Fox, and I am the Executive Director of the Gasoline & Automotive Service Dealers of America. Our members appreciate the opportunity to come before you to comment on HB-6647 AAC On- Board Diagnostic Emission Testing. Our members include some of the current 245- family run businesses that perform emission testing today and they oppose HB-6647 for the following reasons.

First, this committee should know that not one member of the current emission testing team has heard anything about changing or eliminating the current program from the Department of Motor Vehicles or Applus the current vendor running the program. This has really upset those that have worked hard since 2004 to create and operate a service for the State, only to not even be consulted regarding such dramatic changes. If HB-6647 were to pass in its current format and the Commissioner were to implement those changes, all 245 testing stations would be out of business immediately.

In 2004, the State created a public/private partnership for the benefit of Connecticut consumers and switched from centralized emissions testing to a de-centralized program thus creating a network of facilities utilizing current Connecticut family run businesses. While due too a software glitch, the program got off to a rocky start, now it operates with 245 facilities and runs like a well-oiled machine. Consumers have settled in, testing and retesting are done in a cost efficient and time saving manner. No longer are consumers frustrated with long lines, not being able to schedule an appointment and it requested, not having additional services done at the same time. More important, consumers have a more choices and 245 locations are working and hiring staff to perform these tests.

While some changes need to be made too the current program to allow for further enhancements, HB-6647 is not the way to go! Specifically, lines 112 through 127 allow the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to enter into agreements with independent contractors at suitable locations including parking garages for the purpose of utilizing free-standing kiosks referred to as Smart Auto Management or SAM's . Parking garages are not suitable equipped to handle increased exhaust fumes from testing. One need only look at the additional equipment each testing facility had to install and dedicate a service bay in order to meet emissions guidelines.

In addition, lines 128 through 136 would prohibit the commissioner from entering into an inspection agreement with any independent contractor who is engaged in the business of maintaining or repairing vehicles in the state. This would again force consumers into testing at one facility and repairing at another. Eliminating consumer choice and creating higher costs for consumers in this current economy makes no sense.

We believe the opportunity exists to revamp the current program and expand into a safety inspections. Recently the committee has held hearings on the lack of inspections when it comes to livery and taxi vehicles. We have seen the positive results in increased weight station inspections. Connecticut falls fair behind neighboring States when it comes to safety inspections.

Please take this opportunity to have the Commissioner of DMV sit down with the industry to develop a program combining the emissions/safety and insurance inspections all in one. Then consumers can responsibly say they are receiving a service for a fee rather than the current suggestions of just increasing fees for licenses and registrations. One could easily say, the current cost of a license or registration far exceeds the real processing costs of that license or registrations. However, one is hard pressed to say that the current \$20.00 fee for emissions testing is not a real bargain when compared to labor and equipment costs of performing the service.

If the industry has, a real voice at the table, a cost effective, consumer friendly Emission/Safety/Insurance inspection program would be created. This new program will provide more choices for consumers, safer cars on our roads, and provide an additional revenue stream that is not just looked at as paying more for a license or registration but rather delivering a real service of only allowing safe insured cars on our roadways. Imagine being able to have emissions, safety and insurance all checked quickly and cost effectively.

The time is right, it can be done and for this reason we ask you to reject HB-6647 as written and create this new opportunity for the State.