

Editor's Note

One look at the cover of this issue will tell you that it focuses on cars. And as we get ready to go to press, the Washington Auto Show[®] is taking place just down the road. Held in the enormous Walter E. Washington Convention Center, this exhibition showcases new cars from more than 40 manufacturers and draws hundreds of thousands of visitors over its ten-day span. Besides car displays, the family-friendly event offers various forms of entertainment, including celebrity appearances, contests, and interactive displays.

But despite its appeal to the general public, the Washington Auto Show[®] has a more serious purpose, as an excerpt from its mission statement asserts: “Global manufacturers will focus on this show, as its producers will facilitate an annual dialogue, at the highest levels, between industry leaders and public policymakers on issues affecting the automotive industry.” With that focus on policy, it is no accident that the auto show’s schedule is coordinated with the calendar of the U.S. Congress.

This year, for the first time, automakers represented at the show are competing for the Green Car Technology Award[™]. Sponsored by the *Green Car Journal*, this award acknowledges technology currently in use—either in auto manufacturing facilities or in vehicles themselves—that makes cars more fuel-efficient or lessens the negative impact of cars on the environment.

At odds with this eco-friendly trend is an item that recently surfaced in the news—that is, Washington, D.C., the locale of our editorial office, is the most traffic-congested city in the United States. This rating comes from a study conducted by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, which tracked travel time and fuel consumption of commuters.

One way commuters can decrease road congestion and fuel consumption is by carpooling. And the Washington area has a unique form of carpooling known as “slugging.” In existence for about 35 years, this informal system centers around “slugs,” who might be described as “hitchhiking commuters.” Slugs get picked up from a “slug line” at a designated location, usually a suburban parking lot, by lone drivers who need passengers to meet the minimum occupancy required to use the HOV (high occupancy vehicle) lanes of the freeways leading into and out of the city. Slugging provides a free ride for the slug and a faster commute for the driver (because HOV lanes have much less traffic than other lanes).

Slugging is an interesting development associated with cars. You can read about others in the feature article, “Cars, Cars, Cars.”

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