

Wheels: Kurt writes in an e-mail, “We have a 2000 Buick LaSaber, which we use mostly for our distance driving. We have a second car. As an elderly couple we drive very sanely, but at the speed limit. My problem is the difference in maintenance recommendations as stated in the owner’s manual, versus a service schedule put out by our dealer’s service department. The owner’s manual recommends that the transaxle (automatic transmission) be serviced at 50,000 miles if driven under certain strenuous conditions, otherwise every 100,000 miles. The dealer’s manual says this service should be done at 30,000 mile increments. At 33,000 miles, the dealer did perform their “class D” service at a total cost of \$461.00. Now we have more than 60,000 miles on the car and the dealer’s service department wants to do this same service, which includes a whole lot more than the owner’s manual recommends. I am certainly questioning the need for all of this service, particularly since we never abuse the car in our driving. Am I wrong in thinking that we do not need such service, especially the automatic transmission service, for at least another 50,000+ miles? Your opinion will be appreciated.”

Halderman: You asked a great question, and while I do not have a great answer, I think I can address your concerns. The vehicle manufacturer’s recommended maintenance should be considered based on the maximum time or mileage. They are also in the business of selling vehicles and they want to specify a limited amount of service in the belief that this will be viewed as positive, resulting in less maintenance costs. Regarding the servicing of the automatic transmission, servicing it before the recommended service interval is acceptable but this service should not be performed less frequently than specified.

Is it OK to change the transmission fluid or oil sooner than specified? Yes. Is it needed? Probably not. There is one service that most shops recommend that is not discussed by the factory literature and that is throttle body and injector cleaning. This service improves how the engine runs and also helps reduce oxides of nitrogen exhaust emissions. The main thing to remember is that all maintenance items should be performed not longer than specified but it is OK to perform maintenance before the time or mileage indicated by the manufacturer.

