

Wheels: An e-mail from Ken of Franklin asks, “I have a 1999 Mazda Protégé with an automatic transmission. After the car sits overnight or all day without being driven, it takes 30 to 60 seconds (sometimes a little longer) for the car to move when shifted into drive. It will back up immediately without any problem. I was wondering if the whole transmission will need to be rebuilt and approximately how much it will cost. It has 85,000 miles on it and has had the problem since I purchased it. If I don't do anything, could it last as long as I have the car? As always, thanks for your help.”

Halderman: Good question. The cause of the long delay going into drive is usually due to a worn clutch pack for the forward gears. Because the transmission goes into reverse without delay, this leads me to think that the pump assembly unit in the transmission is okay. When reverse is selected, the oil pressure is increased above normal levels to help prevent slippage when backing, especially if driving backward up a steep hill. Is an overhaul necessary? Maybe. What would I do? I would have the transmission fluid replaced or flushed and the filter replaced. If metal particles are discovered during this procedure, then an overhaul would be required. However, if only normal wear particles (non-magnetic) are discovered, then the flush and fill procedure may take care of your problem. An overhaul could cost \$2000 or more so I hope that the fluid change takes care of the problem. Will it last? I do not know – it could last a week or several more years.

