

Wheels: Brad from Texas writes, “My Mazda 3 died at a light on the way to work this past week. It was running kind of crappy, fluctuating idle. After the engine died, it would only barely run, and then just cranks. I had it towed home as I try to do most of my own work on my vehicles. I went through checking stuff and replaced the spark plugs. Poking around, I pushed on the throttle butterfly and it wouldn't move (drive by wire car). I took it off and cleaned it with throttle body cleaner as it was all gummed up and stuck. It runs just about perfect now so apparently the butterfly was so gummed up the engine couldn't move it.

So all is good, except the on/off throttle transition is very abrupt, drives me crazy cruising at 40mph. Maybe there is an air bypass that is still clogged? Also it now idles perfect, even when the air conditioning kicks on, but when moving and pushing in the clutch, it idles at 1,500 RPM until it comes to a stop, and then drops to 900 RPM or so. Any ideas?”

Halderman: The vehicle is equipped with an electronic throttle control (ETC) system. The throttle plate should easily move open and closed from the home position by a spring. The electric motor in the throttle body assembly forces it closed and forces it open from that position using a signal from the computer. Basically, I think it is a bad throttle position sensor that is causing the wrong signals to be processed. About the only thing to do is to replace the assembly.

