

Wheels: Don of Springfield has a 1989 Pontiac Grand Am that seems to upshift and downshift between 45 and 50 MPH. Do you have any ideas?

Halderman: I believe the “shift” you are feeling is the applying and releasing of the torque converter clutch (TCC) also called a lock-up torque converter. The TCC applies to reduce slippage that normally occurs inside a torque converter, which is part of an automatic transmission/transaxle. It is normal for the TCC to apply between 30 MPH and 45 MPH depending on engine load and throttle opening. For example, if the driver is accelerating, the torque converter clutch application is delayed. The problem could be caused by a fault or misadjusted throttle position (TP) sensor. Also a fault with the vehicle speed (VS) sensor could cause the TCC to engage and then disengage if the computer “thinks” that the vehicle speed is changing. A misadjusted brake switch could also cause your problem because the brake switch electrically shuts off electricity to the TCC when the brakes are applied. These types of faults will not set a diagnostic trouble code so an experienced technician should be consulted in the attempt to correct this concern.

