Wheels: A reader writes via e-mail that the engine on his 1991 Oldsmobile Cutlass Ciera equipped with a 3.3 liter V-6 with 166,000 miles stalls at stop signs after it has been driven for a while. Do you have any ideas?

Halderman: The most common problem with any General Motors vehicle equipped with an automatic transmission/transaxle that stutters and then stalls after it has been driven about 20 miles or further is caused by a faulty torque converter clutch (TCC) solenoid. When the solenoid gets hot it can physically stick causing the torque converter clutch to stay applied even when the electrical circuit has been broken by the brake switch and the computer. The torque converter clutch is used to lock the two members of the torque converter together to improve fuel economy. When the solenoid sticks, it is similar to driving a manual transmission and not depressing the clutch when stopping. The vehicle will often shake or stumble slightly as it stalls.

Wheels: Is this a major and expensive repair?

Halderman: No. The replacement of the torque converter clutch solenoid does not require the removal of the transmission/transaxle. The fault can also be easily checked by unplugging the wiring connector at the transmission/transaxle (1981-1991 only) and driving the vehicle. If the stalling does not occur, this test confirms that the solenoid is the fault.