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**Green light**

Now that we have legal marijuana one state over, how do we keep our roads safe?

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TEST DRIVE

## Standing Pat

### 2017 Acura TLX 3.5L SH-AWD Advance

DAN LYONS | text  
Special to the Times Union

**T**he TLX — Acura's midsize, luxury sport sedan — is the successor to the former TL and TSX models. Redesigned in 2015, TLX carries over for 2017 with no changes, save a few new hues added to the color charts. The upscale cousin of the Honda Accord is offered in seven variations ranging in price from \$31,900 - \$44,800.



The lineup starts with two versions powered by a 2.4L four-cylinder engine. The TLX 2.4L has an MSRP of \$31,900. Adding the Technology package bumps the sticker to \$35,950, and pads the standard equipment roster with features like blind spot monitoring, lane keeping assist, forward collision warning, rear cross traffic monitoring, rain sensing wipers, leather-trimmed seats, and a navigation system with voice recognition and

**2017 Acura TLX 3.5L SH-AWD Advance**

MSRP: \$31,900 (2.4L) · As tested: \$45,740

traffic information. HD radio is also included as is arguably the highlight of the grouping — the 10-speaker, 490-watt ELS studio audio system.

I find the TLX's traditional blind spot information system (with mirror lit alerts) preferable to Honda's LaneWatch approach (screen display of rear, right side view). Notably not included here (or on any trim level) is Android Auto or Apple CarPlay functionality for the infotainment system.

The remaining five trim variations are all equipped with a 3.5L V-6 engine. The TLX 3.5L (\$35,350), TLX



THE 2017 ACURA TLX carries over from last year with no changes. But the electronic shifter interface (below, left) is laid out in a line on the console and its design — with the buttons at varying heights — is puzzling.

3.5L with Technology package (\$39,400) and TLX with Advance package (\$42,600) are front-wheel-drive, as are both 2.4 powered models. The Advance package builds on the Tech bundle, adding a collision mitigation braking system, parking sensors fore and aft, adaptive cruise control, remote engine start, ventilated front seats, LED fog lights, exterior puddle lights, road departure mitigation system and auto-dimming side mirrors. The final two, TLX variations are equipped with all-wheel drive, and priced at \$41,600 (Technology) and \$44,800 (Advance). A two-engine strategy is almost a given in the compact luxury segment, and I've driven both TLX choices. The 2.4-liter four is naturally aspirated and rated at 206 horsepower and 182 lb. ft. of torque.

Linked to an eight-speed, dual-clutch automatic transmission, the 2.4L provides respectable acceleration (low-mid 7-second range from 0-60) and feels refined. But, performance is class relative, and the non-turbo four lags many competitive models. Fuel economy is estimated by the EPA to be 24 city/35 highway.

Acura's 3.5L V-6 makes 290 h.p. and 267 lb. ft. of torque. The transmission is a 9-speed automatic, and while it feels to be slower shifting than the 2.4's DCT, overall drivetrain performance is noticeably quicker.

The six is at least a second faster from 0-60: smooth power, more on par with the higher expectations of the company it keeps. Mileage estimates are 21/31 (AWD), and I managed 22 in my test car in a week of mixed driving conditions.

Acura's four-mode Integrated Dynamics System is included on all TLX models. Eco, Normal, Sport and Sport+ each have corresponding settings for throttle response, transmission mapping, steering effort and traction/handling systems.

Most noticeable are the gearing/shifting selections in the Sport/Sport+ modes, holding the car in each gear longer before shifting, to improve engine response.

In winters like last year, you really didn't need all-wheel-drive (or a snowblower, for that matter). The historically mild temps (a godsend to winter denialists like me) would've tolerated riding your bike to work, on all but a very few days. However, most winters

*Continued on page 2*

A two-engine strategy is almost a given in the compact luxury segment.

AUTO KNOW

## Autobahn: The (speed limit) reality behind the myth

**T**he Autobahn isn't what it used to be. Actually, it's nowhere near what it was intended to be: an ultra-fast transfer method from one metro center to another.

Almost mythical in its status around the world, the German Autobahn has almost a legendary mystique. Reality, unfortunately, is different than the legend.

**In the beginning...**

The myth of limitless speed and unbridled horsepower is, in fact, just that. Tempolimits, as they are called here, restrict most speeds to 120 km-h (75 mph) — or less — for long stretches. Traffic jams are common. Unlimited stretches are actually very limited.

The idea for the Autobahn was first conceived before World War II. One project was a private initiative and was originally envisioned as a "car-only road" that would cross Germany from Hamburg in the north to Frankfurt farther south. The first section was opened in 1929 between Dusseldorf and Opladen.

Three years later, construction was completed on a section between Cologne and Bonn. And, in the 1930s, under the influence of German leader Adolf Hitler, a program was launched to build the Reichsautobahnen that linked north and south and east to west. Parts of that stretch were completed in the 1930s under the National Socialist government, but construction was eventually halted during the war.

In the 1950s, the West German government restarted

construction and continuously invested in new sections to the point that most of the current highway system was completed in the 1980s. Some sections in the former East Germany were only completed after reunification in 1990.

**The Autobahn today**

Germany's Autobahn network now has a total length of about 8,000 miles. Most of the roads are well maintained and often have multiple lanes including breakdown lanes and call boxes every two kilometers (1.3 miles) in case of emergency. There are more than 700 24-hour service areas.

The list of Autobahn rules is lengthy: it is illegal to run out of gas; follow too closely; flash headlights; pass on the right; or permanently occupy the left (passing) lane. And there is an unwritten hierarchy: a Porsche will not move over for a Volkswagen and a VW won't budge for a Ford.

**Now, about speed limits**

About half of the total length of the Autobahn has no limit, about one-third has a permanent limit and the remaining parts have temporary limits.

Famous for being some of the few public roads in the world without blanket speed limits, the Autobahn is actually relatively safe, with a fatality rate of about half



that found on U.S. freeways (International Road Traffic and Accident Database, 2012).

Limits are imposed to reduce pollution and noise. Limits are put in place through traffic guidance systems that monitor weather and traffic jams.

When there is no speed limit, the recommended rate of travel is 130 km-h (about 80 mph). That is not a binding speed limit, but being involved in crash at high speed can lead to hefty fines.

It is no coincidence that most of the unlimited sections of the Autobahn are located in the south of Germany where Mercedes-Benz, Audi, Porsche and BMW are headquartered.

Speeds of more than 300 km-h (185 mph) are not uncommon, but rarely attainable. When they are, it is unbridled, enthusiastic glee, especially for someone with a nice ride.

It is the assurance of knowing someone will move over when you approach with a faster car.

It is the peace of mind that no police cars are waiting for you (unless it is a limited zone, where photo radar is everywhere). It is 200. Or 250. Or 300 km-h.

To Germans, the right to drive unlimited is the essence of freedom.

"It is the last of our freedoms," says a resident of Munich. "It is the last unregulated aspect of German life."

— Steven Reive, Wheelbase Media

