

The airbag is intended to protect drivers in frontal crashes and will absorb the forward motion of the driver. By absorbing the forward motion, the airbag can lessen the velocity with which a person may be thrown from the motorcycle, Honda says.

Rival motorcycle companies have also been trying to develop similar airbags, but apparently the complicated technology of an airbag—which includes strategically placed sensors and an electrical component to fire the airbag—is only possible on large bikes such as the Gold Wing.

## Powerful Acura NSX successor to come

**T**he NSX, once considered a flagship, albeit exotic, component of Acura's line, has run its 15-yr. course, but its replacement will be an even more powerful sports car.

The new model—slated to debut in the next 3 to 10 years—will have a V10 engine, as opposed to the NSX's V6, says spokesperson Mike Spencer.

The new car will likely draw from the HSC (High-Performance Sports Concept) prototype shown at the 2004 North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

The HSC has a four-wheel double wishbone suspension with high-performance disc brakes on each wheel. Scissor-style doors will grant access to the driving compartment.

The NSX's December sign-off comes because it couldn't be inexpensively modified to meet new 2006 emissions and other regulations in various countries.

Because the NSX sells in low volume, the amount of retooling needed to make it comply with stricter regula-

tions would be cost-prohibitive, Spencer says. "The thought was to put the money into another car."

The NSX was the first sports car with an all-aluminum chassis and body, competing with the likes of Lamborghini and Ferrari.

—S. Lorimor



## Track your teen driver

**R**emotely switching on the dome light of your teen's car is enough to freak them out and tell them to get home. It is how some parents are playing Big Brother to their children, sending them messages as they monitor their driving habits with GPS units and computers.

GPS units and antennas can be installed behind a car dash. Parents then subscribe to a handful of tracking services, logon to the Internet or make a phone call to see or be told the path of their teen's car.

Mark Allbaugh, owner of one such system provider, AlltrackUSA, says the tools give parents peace of mind and control. Some parents tell their teen they're being tracked; others don't. Regardless, Allbaugh's customers have shown tracking knows no bounds. "We even have a woman serving in Iraq who checked on her daughter here (with a tracker)," Allbaugh says.

Other system providers include SignalTrac, Teen Arrive Alive and Discreet Wireless, which markets a system called Marcus. Systems sell for about \$400 to \$500. Some offer detailed online maps of where a car is and what speed and direction it is traveling. A service charge of 25 cents to 50 cents may be applied each time you check the info.

With Alltrack's and Discreet Wireless' systems, when a teen goes out of a predefined boundary in his or her car, parents can be paged, e-mailed or called. Or with Alltrack, the dome light can be activated.

In addition, Doug Benson of Discreet Wireless suggests talking to your car insurance carrier about a discount on rates for having the tracking device on your teen's car. "We have spoken to customers who have talked to their insurance company and they received a discount of 10 percent to 15 percent."

—S. Lorimor

## 'Plastic oil' could be used in cars

**O**ne day your car's engine may be lubricated with recycled polyethylene plastic bottles. Researchers have made oil from the bottles and say the lubricant could help improve fuel efficiency and reduce the frequency of oil changes.

The polyethylene is broken down by heat into a wax that has the suitable molecular properties for further processing into lubricating oil, according to a study published in the journal *Energy & Fuels*. The lubricating oil could be used as motor oil or transmission fluid.

Stephen J. Miller, Ph.D., a senior consulting scientist at Chevron Energy Technology Company, says it could help auto manufacturers in meeting federally mandated fuel economy standards. Experts say most recyclable plastic is made from polyethylene.

## Car stickers will see stars

**A** provision that requires star ratings for crash-test results on new car stickers was signed into law by President Bush as part of the new transportation bill. It will take effect in September 2007. We reported in the September/October issue of *Consumers Digest* that lawmakers were pushing for the star mandate. Independent of the law, Honda has announced it is placing the stars on all its 2006 model-year vehicles. ■