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Letter to the Editor: Automakers should adopt Auto Stop-Start

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Vehicle idling is harmful in many ways. It's bad for our air quality, impacts on climate change, wastes fuel, damages engines, creates noise and is illegal (when parked) in certain instances and locales. Drivers can be made aware to avoid idling unnecessarily when parked, but we can't stop idling in traffic at stoplights, etc. Or can we?

Imagine a conventional vehicle coming to a stop and stalling out -- by design -- and then restarting when pressing the accelerator, just as a hybrid does now. This is the Auto Stop-Start system (Google for details). Is it some future solution to idling in traffic? No, it is available today and currently utilized on two European models: BMW and Citroen. And more are on the way in Europe. This technology is quite simple, employing a reversible alternator that acts as a standard alternator one minute (driven by the engine to charge the battery) but, when required, then acts as a starter motor, driven by the battery to re-start the engine. The benefits are obvious: significant improvement in air quality, reduction of millions of tons of carbon emissions, millions of barrels of fuel saved and engines that last longer.

We can get the ball rolling on Auto Stop-Start for America right here in Vermont. Our Sen. Bernie Sanders is a member of the Senate Environment Committee, chaired by Sen. Barbara Boxer. They are concerned about the urgency of climate change. Sanders needs to hear from you. Encourage him to work with members of this committee to push automobile manufacturers to adopt the Auto Stop-Start system for U.S. vehicles.

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