

Proposal I

To create an additional Improved Touring class between ITA and ITS

Referred to here as "IT2", this class would include only post-1989, four-cylinder, compact cars, ranging in manufacturer's quoted power from 120 to 150hp and with stock curb weights between 2200 and 2800 pounds. Preparation rules for this group of hatchback, 2-door, and 4-door cars—which includes a small number of models currently listed in ITA and ITS—would be identical to that of the other IT classes in all respects. Sports, GT and "2+2" cars would not be listed in IT2, irrespective of similar actual or potential performance.

Current general practice is to classify most of these cars into ITS, recognizing that their performance potential is too great for ITA. Because of this, there exist huge competitive disincentives (e.g., the e36 BMW 325) for members to enter current IT2-type cars in ITS. Further, members are discouraged from requesting classification of new cars from this market segment, anticipating that they will be listed in ITS and rendered uncompetitive.

Positive outcomes of the creation of IT2 are likely to include the following:

A narrow technology envelope, resulting in within-class equity – since all of these cars are delivered with five-speed transmissions, similar brakes, front wheel drive, modern aerodynamics, contemporary valve train technology, and computer-controlled fuel injection systems, the class will be very homogenous. Classifying cars starting with the 1990 model year heads off concerns associated with efforts to equitably accommodate older-technology cars.

A class for "ITS orphans" – entrants of currently competitive ITS sports and grand touring cars have little reason to object to the creation of IT2 and the movement of currently classified IT2-type cars out of the class. Concerns about the breadth of performance in ITS created by the addition of cars at the faster end of the continuum may be resolved, within the "no competition adjustment" philosophy of Improved Touring. The number of requests for reclassification to ITA of cars like the Dodge NEON suggests that there exist significant member concerns about this issue.

A class for "ITA overdogs" – IT2 would address vocal complaints among members that the performance standard for ITA has been raised by cars with significantly greater horsepower and newer technology (e.g. Honda CRX Si and Nissan 240SX), a situation often cited as motivation for entrants of heretofore competitive ITA cars to defect to region-specific "spec" classes or other sanctioning bodies.

A class for a large number of currently unlisted cars – the median 130hp, 2300 pound sport compact car makes up a dramatic percentage of the vehicles sold in the U.S. over the last 15 years, and supports an enormous performance and aftermarket industry. Other sanctioning bodies have recognized this and are providing venues to allow this group of cars to race. IT2 would allow SCCA club racers to capitalize on the momentum generated by these trends and the increasing popularity of the visually similar SPEED World Challenge touring cars.

Negligible consequences, relative to positive impact – IT2 would not "poach" a significant number of cars from ITS since not many are currently being entered, so these grids will not be much diminished. Entrants of "old school" ITA cars would get a competitive reprieve (again, without resorting to competition adjustments), diminishing recent negative impacts on the perceived competitiveness and value of these cars. Current entrants of IT2-type cars already listed in ITA would not be relegated to the back of another class grid, protecting their investments as well. Not insignificantly, several member stakeholder groups could potentially feel as if their concerns are being heard, without imposing undue hardship on anyone.

A philosophical and marketing update of the IT category – with the exception of ITS, the Improved Touring classes are largely populated by cars that are 20 or more years old. IT2 gets around the difficulty of integrating new cars into existing classes, and puts an entirely new generation of cars on the track.

Proposal 2

To apply a prescribed weight specification formula to IT2

Should the creation of IT2 find favor among members of the Competition Board, the Club Racing program would be afforded a unique opportunity to define a process for leveling performance of cars in this class. It is therefore proposed that a published specification formula be created and applied, that determines the race weight of every IT2 car based solely on its physical attributes.

The precise nature of this formula is far less important than that it be (a) publicly known, (b) universally applied, (c) based on measurable attributes of the vehicle, and (d) applied only once, upon initial classification. Possible variables in this formula might include but not be limited to (a) stock engine power, (b) engine displacement, (c) valve train type (e.g., Honda VTEC), or (d) inlet or valve area. Other attributes, beyond the powertrain, might also be considered (e.g., brake swept area) but, given the homogeneity of this group of cars, would likely yield rapidly diminishing returns in competitive equity.

Importantly, it is not proposed herein that competition adjustments—based on on-track performance—be applied to IT2, nor is it suggested that weight specifications be set based on anticipated performance potential, as many members believe has been the case in past IT classifications.

Positive outcomes of the creation of an IT2 weight classification formula are likely to include the following:

Predictable weight specifications – members could accurately know what the race weight of any given car would be, prior to requesting classification, encouraging the infusion of new models into the IT category.

Decreased burden on the Competition Board – applying a simple formula based on attributes provided by manufacturer documents would expedite the classification process for all involved. The implementation of competition adjustments could be averted—at least for IT2—realizing a considerable time savings in the future.

Increased member confidence in the classification system – a published, mathematical system would eliminate apparent inconsistencies, removing any room for accusations of error or patronage as new cars are classified.

An even more level playing field – the homogeneity of IT2 would provide a degree of equity in performance potential. Basing race weights on physical attributes of those same cars would only enhance the likelihood that a large number of cars might have the potential to be competitive.

A partial resolution of concerns about race weights and competitiveness – while not immediately addressing all of the common complaints of this nature voiced by members, the application of this process to IT2 would pilot a system that might be applied more broadly in the future to assuage member concerns—within the current “no competition adjustments” philosophy of the IT category.

Though strictly an academic exercise, one example of a possible weight-specification formula may be found at <http://www.it2.evaluand.com/wtform.php3>